

THE TRINITY

EVIDENCE and ISSUES



ROBERT MOREY

THE TRINITY

EVIDENCE and ISSUES

UNIQUE to Christianity – and paramount among its tenets – is the doctrine of one personal and intimate God embodied in three individually identifiable persons.

Challenged, ridiculed, and denied in nearly every era of Church history, Trinitarianism has unabashedly survived and met all detractors by direct appeal to the preponderance of scriptural evidence.

Now, faced with the prevalence of intellectual and cultural relativism, the absolute authority of Scripture is itself under attack – even within the arena of Christian theology itself.

Undaunted by contemporary assaults on the verity of the Trinity and the authority of Scripture, Dr. Robert Morey offers a new and compelling apologetic that directly addresses and convincingly subverts the all modern issues that deny a scripturally-based belief in the Trinity.

Uniquely qualified for this debate, Dr. Morey is a professional researcher of issues that affect the future of the Christian Church as well as Western thought and culture.

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Intimately familiar with current ideas that shape the landscape of the cultural and philosophical debate, Dr. Morey undermines the assumptions upon which their attacks on Trinitarianism are based.

Conversant with all the relevant arguments and assumptions of those who see an outdated belief in the Trinity as a natural casualty of the death of Scriptural authority, Dr. Morey aggressively revives the case for a Trinitarian view – and for the reliability of Scripture as well.

Though evidence of the Trinity can be and is drawn from reliable evidences quite apart from the scriptural record, Dr. Morey insists that Scripture is our surest authority – for it is there we discover the most compelling argument of all – the very God we seek has of his own accord revealed himself for all who are willing to honestly seek him!

Robert Morey

Dr. Morey is the Executive Director of the Research and Education Foundation of Newport, Pennsylvania.

He has earned degrees in philosophy, theology and apologetics. His more than twenty-nine books on various topics in the fields of theology and apologetics have been recognized with numerous awards and many have been translated and sold worldwide.

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Unintimidated by the tide of human thought in contemporary philosophy, ethics, and even liberal theology, Dr. Robert Morey builds a theoretically sound, intellectually compelling, and biblically based case for the Trinity within the context of those issues that will dominate twenty-first century thought.

From the unique vantage point as a professional researcher of those issues which affect the Christian Church and its role in Western culture, Dr. Morey brings a perspective to his study of the triune God that makes this a work of unparalleled significance to all who desire to understand and positively impact the world in which we live.

Carefully documented scholarship combined with a straightforward and journalistic writing style make this a serious work that can and should be read by every thinking contemporary Christian.

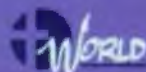
*A beacon of sanity. A foundation of certainty.
A timely and compelling reexamination of the biblical
reality of God and his absolute character in light of a
twenty-first century society awash in meaningless relativism.*

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Dr. Morey is an internationally recognized scholar in the fields of theology and apologetics. He is the author of twenty-nine books, some of which have been translated into Spanish, French, German, Dutch, Italian, Finnish, Chinese, Norwegian, Farsi, and Polish. He is the Executive Director of the Research and Education Foundation which is dedicated to researching those issues which affect not only the future of the Christian Church but also Western thought and culture. For a full listing of all his books and tapes, contact the Research and Education Foundation, P.O. Box 250, Newport, PA 17074. Some of his books include:

Satan's Devices
Islamic Invasion
The Truth About Masons
Death And The Afterlife
Studies In The Atonement
Battle Of The Gods
How To Keep Your Faith While In College
The New Atheism and The Erosion of Freedom
An Introduction To Defending the Faith
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Jesus In The Mishnah and the Talmud

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ROBERT MOREY

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Introduction

The biblical basis of the Trinity in the context of the progressive revelation of God's mighty deeds and words in the history of redemption as recorded in the Bible is the focus of this work. We are beginning with the *a priori* assumption that it is possible to know, discuss, and debate the nature of God. We are assuming that we can know if the doctrine of the Trinity is true or false.

Since relativism is so dominant today, many people assume that no one can really know anything about God. It is assumed that any and all views of God are acceptable because they are only personal preferences and not objective truth. As long as your view of God makes you happy, then it is correct for you. But you should not try to convert others to your view of God because it really does not matter in the end.

Modern relativists fail to recognize that when they state that no one can really know anything about God, they have just made a self-refuting statement. Evidently, they *know* that God is unknowable. To them this is not a personal preference but an objective truth.

It is also self-refuting to say that no one should try to convert others to his view of God because the person making this statement is doing his best to convert you to his view of God. If relativists really believed that it does not matter what you believe as long as it makes you happy, then why do they persist in the attempt to refute the doctrine of the Trinity?

Once we come to the position that we can really know if God is a Trinity, then we must decide upon the Origin of our knowledge of God. Where do we go to find objective truth about God?

The Logical Options

We must either look within ourselves or outside of ourselves for the knowledge of God. This knowledge will be found in our own heart or mind or in something or someone outside of ourselves.

Looking Within

If we adopt the Eastern way and look within ourselves to find out what God is like, we immediately fall into the quagmire of relativism. Whatever god, gods or goddesses we find within us do not exist independent of how we conceive of them.

This is just as futile as Western Greek philosophers such as Socrates who looked within themselves for the knowledge of God. They finally

concluded that "man is the measure of all things," including the god within. Once again we sink into the quagmire of relativism.

Looking Outside

If we decide that we must look outside of ourselves for the knowledge of God, then we will either look *down*, *across*, or *up*.

Looking Down

We look "down" when we try to find God in something that is intrinsically *less* than what we are. To look to insects and animals as the Origin of truth is absurd because they are not cognitive egos who can say, "I am." Thus, they are intrinsically inferior to man who as a cognitive ego can say, "I am."

The "God" of Pantheism

Pantheism is actually a form of atheism in that it denies the existence of the God of the Bible who created the world out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) and exists apart from and independent of His creation.

After denying the existence of God, pantheism takes the word "God" and applies it to the world. But the "god" of pantheism is not a personal God who hears and answers prayer. The "god" of pantheism refers to a non-personal force or energy.

This universal "force" is intrinsically less than what we are because "it" is not a cognitive ego. Thus, while man as a cognitive ego knows that he exists and as a cognitive ego he can communicate with other cognitive egos, the "god" of pantheism does not know that "it" exists or that we exist. "It" is incapable of knowledge, will, or emotion. Thus, pantheism's "it" cannot be a sufficient basis for the knowledge of God because an "I am" is always superior to an "it."

Looking Across

We look "across" when we assume that some fellow human being is the one who can tell us all about God. It does not really matter if he is an Eastern guru, a cult leader or a psychic. In each case, a finite human being has been exalted to become the infinite Origin of truth.

The main problem with identifying a human being as the Origin is that he or she is only a finite creature and makes mistakes and errors just like

the rest of us (Rom. 3:23). Their personal opinions are just as relative and subjective as ours. Thus, they are only *equal* to us in the end and, hence, cannot provide a sufficient basis for a true knowledge of God.

Looking Up

We look "up" when we identify the Origin as a deity or deities who are above us. The ancient Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians worshipped a multitude of finite deities who were only "man writ large."

These finite deities were human in every respect. They lied, cheated, and stole because they reflected the corrupt human society in which they were worshipped. Since they fought and disagreed among themselves, the gods could not provide mankind with one infinite standard for truth, justice, meaning or beauty. Since they were finite in nature, they themselves were particulars in search of a universal to explain them.

The Personal versus the Infinite

Pagan concepts of god are almost always based upon the *a priori* assumption that God cannot be personal and infinite at the same time. If god is personal, i.e., self-conscious and aware of the world around himself or herself, then god must be finite, i.e., limited in the same ways that we are limited.

On the other hand, if god is infinite, then god cannot be personal. God is reduced to a non-personal force or energy like electricity. Thus, this god is viewed as an "it" instead of as a "he" or "she."

A god which is infinite but non-personal cannot be the Origin of truth because "it" is as ignorant and unconcerned about truth as a rock or a tree stump.

A personal god who is finite, i.e., limited in knowledge and power, is quite useless. If you prayed to such a god, he may not know what to do and, even if he did, he may not have the power to do it.

The One or the Many

Another false *a priori* assumption of most pagan religions is that God must be either One or Many. It is assumed that the only choice we have is between polytheism and some form of Unitarian monotheism. The idea of one God in three Persons never crossed the pagan mind anymore than the idea that God could be both personal and infinite at the same time.

General Revelation

In the book of Romans, the Apostle Paul tells us that all men are "without excuse" because the creation around them and their conscience within them is sufficient to demonstrate the existence of God (Rom. 1:18-25) and the sinfulness of man (Rom. 2:12-16).

General Revelation is the non-verbal witness of the creation and the human conscience to the existence of God and the universal depravity of man. This general witness is universal in that it goes on twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, to all men everywhere, in every generation. The "heavens above" and the "conscience within" bear witness to the glory of God and the sinfulness of man.

Given the universality of general revelation, it would seem theoretically possible to argue from the creation and the conscience to the Creator and Law Giver of the universe. The only "fly in the ointment" to this procedure is that Paul also tells us that all men by nature "suppress the truth by their wickedness" (Rom. 1:18). Thus, the light of general revelation is suppressed as rebel sinners close their eyes and shut their ears lest they be confronted with the God who is there.

While general revelation is sufficient to condemn all men in that it leaves them "without excuse" (Rom. 1:20), it is not sufficient to save anyone. If someone could live up to the light of general revelation, this would only make him a candidate for further light. But according to Paul in Romans 3:10-23, no one has yet to do so.

Special Revelation

Thankfully, the God who is there has not been silent. In addition to the witness of the heavens (Ps. 19:1), God has spoken through his prophets whom He infallibly inspired to reveal His will to a lost and erring mankind (Heb. 1:1). In Scripture we have the very mind and heart of God revealed in human language (I Cor. 2:6-16). The self-disclosure of God in Scripture is, thus, the only place where we can find true knowledge about God.

Within the pages of the Bible, God not only reveals Himself by way of personal encounter, but He also reveals true information about Himself, the world around us, and who and what we are. In other words, God has given us propositional statements in Scripture which enable us to understand His very nature. Thus, through Scripture, we can truly know facts about God, as well as know God in a personal way.

Propositional Revelation

What is a "propositional statement"? It is a declarative sentence which asserts a statement of fact the meaning of which is either true or false. For example, Hebrews 11:6 tells us:

And without faith it is impossible to please [God], for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

We are given several propositional statements in this verse:

1. It is possible to please or to displease God.
2. Without faith, we cannot please God.
3. God exists.
4. He is a personal God who is aware of our existence as well as of His own existence.
5. He will reward those who diligently seek Him.

Another example can be found in Romans 10:9:

If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.

In this text we are told that in order to be saved we must accept as true the following propositions:

1. Jesus is Lord.
2. God raised Him from the dead.

In all such propositions, what is asserted is either true or false. Either Jesus is Lord or He is not Lord. Either Jesus was bodily resurrected or He is still dead. The authors of Scripture did not play mental games in which they both affirmed and denied the same propositions.

The attempt of some modern theologians to deny the propositional nature of revelation is refuted by the fact that the authors of the Bible believed that what they wrote was factually true. They even went out of their way to deny that they were writing myths or legends (II Pet. 1:16-18) and to state that they took the utmost care in their research (Luke 1:1-4).

What Does This Mean?

The only way to know God personally and to know about God intellectually is through God's self-revelation as given in Holy Scripture. The attempt to define God on any other basis than a careful exegesis of Scripture has always been the mother of heresy.

Looking to the Bible

Only the Bible speaks of an infinite/personal triune God who is the Origin of truth, meaning, justice, morals, and beauty. This triune God speaks to us in the Bible by the singular "I" and the plural "We" at the same time without falling into the errors of Unitarianism or polytheism. This is what makes Trinitarian theology so unique. It breaks free from and transcends the pagan dichotomies of infinite versus personal and One versus Many.

The doctrine of the Trinity is not the product of man's mind, emotions or experience. It is not a subjective preference but has its origins in special revelation and is thus unique in the history of ideas.

Part I

Prolegomena

Chapter One

The Epistemology of Truth

There are two things which are true of all theological writers. They are following a certain epistemological method in their search for truth and they are utilizing a certain hermeneutic in their interpretation of Scripture.

The problem with most writers is that they have never seriously reflected upon exactly what epistemology or hermeneutic they are using. They have unconsciously picked up their approach to truth, and the way they interpret the Bible, much in the same way that a dog picks up fleas. Thus they end up with a haphazard mix of conflicting ideas and methodologies.

Most theological writers do not reveal their epistemology or their hermeneutics to their readers because they are ignorant themselves of what hidden principles guide their search for the truth. We could not find a single book on the Trinity in which the author revealed the epistemological method which he used to discover truth and the literary principles which determined how he interpreted the Bible.

It is on this basis that we have decided to introduce the doctrine of the Trinity with a discussion of the epistemological method we will be using throughout this book. Since our only intent is to explain the method which will guide us in our study of the Trinity, we will not be giving a complete discussion of epistemology, but we will at this point begin with a brief introduction to the main branches of philosophy.

Four Basic Branches

Philosophy is commonly divided into four basic branches, each focusing on a different issue:

Metaphysics	Epistemology	Ethics	Aesthetics
(being)	(knowledge)	(morals)	(beauty)

Metaphysics deals with the nature of being or reality. Epistemology deals with how we know what is "real," i.e., true. Ethics distinguishes good from evil and right from wrong. Aesthetics has the task of distinguishing beauty from ugliness and defining the nature of art. Given

the ugliness of most modern art, it is obvious that aesthetics has been much ignored in our generation.

Epistemology

While metaphysics decides the issue of whether there is any truth to find, epistemology asks how we know the truth. This question has been kicked around for several thousand years and a general consensus has been reached. There are several different methods by which truth can be discovered.

While a complete overview of epistemology would examine retrodution, abduction, and adduction as well as induction and deduction, we will limit our comments to the classical methods of induction and deduction.

Our own position is that theology is not limited to just one methodology. Some subjects are more suited to one method than they are to another. The chief error to avoid is reductionism in which one method is proclaimed as the *only* valid method.

The Scientific Method

The empirical sciences follow the *synthetic, a posteriori, inductive* method in which they move from human experience to all things including God. The inductive method attempts to move

1. from the parts to the whole,
2. from the particular to the universal,
3. from the finite to the infinite,
4. from human experience to truth,
5. from the effects to the cause,
6. from the evidences to God.

This method is called *synthetic* because the scientist is combining a number of individual experiences into a single universal "law." After obtaining the same result from a particular experiment time after time, the scientist, at some point, will feel that he can make a universally true statement which will cover all future experiments. This is what is commonly called a scientific "law." He is starting from and with his own personal experiences and then making the leap to a universal law.

It is called *a posteriori* because the conclusion is arrived at *after* the experiments take place. He is not beginning with the universal law and then testing to see if it is true. The law is developed *after* experience.

It is *inductive* in that nothing conclusive can be proven. All he can logically conclude from induction is a certain degree of probability. The so-called "law" or concept has either a low, medium, or high probability of being true.

In logic, if you want a universal in the conclusion, you must have at least one universal in the premise. Thus you cannot logically make the leap to a necessary truth no matter how many particular experiences you pile up. Since the inductive method begins only with particular human experiences, its conclusions are only *probably* true to a certain degree.

Thomas Aquinas

The inductive method has been dominant in much of Christian theology ever since the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas. His adoption and defense of Aristotle's epistemology of induction was a watershed event in church history as well as Western history. Not only is Aquinas still "the" official philosopher of Roman Catholicism, but his approach to truth is the philosophic basis of much modern evangelical "evidential" apologetics as well as modern science.

Aquinas replaced the deductive methodology which had been followed by the early Church Fathers, i.e., Augustine, and later by the Reformers. Nineteenth century Reformed theologians, such as Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield, committed themselves to the inductive method because they wanted theology to be accepted by the academic world as a legitimate science like math or biology. They did not realize that they had opened the way for such liberal theologians as William Sanday to undermine the inspiration of the Bible.¹ By making human experience the Origin of truth instead of the God of the Bible, they had unwittingly made man the judge of God instead of God the judge of man.

The Battle Over Inerrancy

Not much was written on the subject until the 1970's and 1980's when neo-orthodox and neo-evangelical theologians attacked the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture. They claimed that the inerrancy of the Bible was the product of the "old" deductive method and, hence, invalid in the eyes of all those who use the inductive method. Orthodox evangelicals responded by either defending deductive reasoning or by developing new terminology.²

The issue of inerrancy forced many evangelical scholars to rethink their naive adoption of the inductive scientific method in theology. After all, since God cannot be weighed or measured in a laboratory, theology

was not really an empirical science *per se*. We must face the truth that Christian theology did not come from "below," i.e., human experience, but from "above," i.e., special revelation.

The Deductive Method

In distinction to Aristotle's inductive method, adopted by Aquinas for use in Christian theology, we will be using the *analytic, a priori, deductive* method which moves:

1. from the whole to the parts,
2. from the universal to the particular,
3. from the infinite to the finite,
4. from truth to human experience,
5. from the cause to the effects,
6. from God to the evidences.

Most evangelical Christians have heard the principle, "Do not interpret the Bible according to experience, but experience according to the Bible." This principle is the very heart and soul of *a priori* deductive reasoning. Instead of beginning with human experience as the measure of all things including God, we should begin with God as the measure of all things including human experience.

The epistemological method followed in this book is *analytic* because we will begin with the Trinity as the "given" of special revelation and then deduce various theoretical implications from it.

What do we mean by the word "given"? The "given" is the "first principle," "founding principle," "opening presupposition," or "starting axiom" which forms the basis of a system and from which the details of the system are deduced.

Obviously, you have to begin somewhere with something. That "something" is what is called in theology the "given." If the implications or deductions of that "given" are demonstrated to be true, then the "given" must be true as well.

In geometry the "given" concepts are called axioms. Geometry begins with certain concepts which are unproved, but from which the rest of geometry is deduced. Theology also has its axioms or beginning principles. This is why we do not hesitate to begin with the doctrine of the Trinity as our *a priori* axiom.

The doctrine of the Trinity is *a priori* because it does not originate from human experience, but from special revelation. Indeed, any concept

of God which has its Origin in human experience should more properly be labeled anthropology or psychology, than theology.

Our method is *deductive* in that the premises and conclusions are so related that, if one is true, then the other is necessarily and conclusively true. A deductive argument is either valid or invalid while an inductive argument is merely probable or improbable.

How to Learn About Automobiles

Perhaps the following illustration will help the reader to understand the difference between these two methods. There are two ways to learn about the automobile. You can begin with a whole car and tear it down into its individual parts. Or, you can begin with the individual parts and put them together to make a whole car. Your knowledge will thus come either from “above” or “below.” It will involve a tearing down or a building up.

The method we are proposing begins “from above” with the doctrine of the Trinity as our *a priori*, i.e., as the theological given, and then asks what must also be true in order for the Trinity to be true. It is *transcendental* in this sense.

We will begin with the doctrine of the Trinity and then *deduce* from it the kinds of things which “must be” in the Bible. If we find what “must be” in the Bible, this is conclusive proof that we were on the right track to begin with.

Perhaps the reader is thinking, “This method is not fair. You are beginning with the Trinity as your *a priori* and then proceeding to the evidences.” We gladly admit that we are beginning with the Triune God as an *a priori* truth for two very good reasons.

First, this is where the Bible begins (Gen. 1:1). The Biblical authors do not begin by appealing to human experience to prove that God exists. Thus God’s existence is never an issue in the Bible. The authors of Scripture begin with God as the explanation for the existence of man and not *vica versa*. To them God is the measure of all things—including man.

In his compelling book, *Toward A Recovery Of Christian Belief*, Dr. Carl F. Henry argues cogently for a return to deductive reasoning in theology:

Empiricism has been much the vogue in recent evangelical theology. While it is not pressed the length of making sensory observation and laboratory verification the only reliable way of knowing, it nonetheless encourages a theological appeal to particulars in search of a universal, rather than postulating a

universal explanatory principle subject to testing. Any deductive exposition of Christianity is therefore disparaged.

Modern loss of interest in the history of doctrine plays a part in such discrediting of deductive theology. Many evangelical seminaries in fact offer no course whatever in historical theology.

Most conservative Christians are therefore unaware that Christendom's earliest systematic theology began with God as the basic axiom and from this explanatory principle derived the content of the Christian religion.

Ever since the beginning of the Christian era the operative methodology for systematic theology has been mainly deductive. Augustine and Anselm championed theological deduction. Not until Thomas Aquinas proposed an empirical alternative in the twelfth century was the deductive method seriously disputed.³

Every theology or philosophy has a starting point enabling it to get under way. Euclid's classic work on the *Elements*, written about 300 B.C., stated the five postulates or unproved principles concerning lines, angles, and figures from which he deduced geometry.⁴

What distinguishes Christian axioms from rival axioms is not that Christian axioms are a priori; all axioms are. "No one can consistently object," writes Gordon H. Clark, "to Christianity's being based on a non demonstrable axiom. If the secularists exercise their privilege of basing their theorems on axioms, then so can Christians. If the former refuse to accept our axioms, then they can have no logical objection to our rejecting theirs."⁵

As Alvin Plantinga put it, ". . . the Christian philosopher is entirely within his rights in starting from belief in God He has the right to take the existence of God for granted and go on from there in his philosophical work just as other philosophers take for granted the existence of the past, say, or of other persons, or the basic claims of contemporary physics."⁶ In Plantinga's words: "The Christian philosopher quite properly *starts from* the existence of God, and presupposes it in philosophical work"⁷

Henry, Clark and Plantinga are right. It is time to take back the high ground of the deductive method. We need to be biblical in our epistemology as well as in our theology.

Second, the non-Christian begins with his own set of presuppositions. He assumes that his first principles are *a priori* truths. Even the idea that induction is neutral is an *a priori* concept.

Just as the Christian philosopher begins with the assumption that God is the measure of all things, the humanistic philosopher begins with the assumption that man is the measure of all things. To the Christian philosopher, the existence of man is justified by the prior existence of God, while to the humanist philosopher, the existence of God is justified by the *priori* existence of man.

The Archemedian point of non-Christian philosophy and religion is the *a priori* assumption that man is the Origin of truth, justice, meaning, and beauty. The humanist assumes that he can understand God and the world by himself, from himself, and with himself without any help from God. Whatever is "thinkable" to him is true and real, and whatever "unthinkable" to him is neither true nor real. He assumes that he is *autonomous* because he assumes that he does not *need* any special revelation from God to understand metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, or aesthetics.

The Christian's *a priori* is based on God's revelation in the Bible just as surely as the non-Christian's *a priori* is based on his experience in the world. Thus the real question is not who has *a priori* concepts, but whose assumptions pan out in the real world. If the Christian system is true, then we would expect to find certain things true as well. If the non-Christian system is true, then we would expect to find it verified in the real world.

A Test Case

Perhaps it would be helpful to apply this method to the existence of God. Logically speaking, the *existence* of something is always prior to the issue of its *nature*. After all, if God does not exist, it would be a waste of time to discuss the Trinity.

The amount of ink and blood that has been shed over the existence of God reveals its irresistible attraction to the human mind and its intrinsic capacity to inflame the human heart. For this reason, it is important to approach this subject with the following eight foundational principles in mind.

Principle #1

There is absolutely no logical relationship between the existence or non-existence of God and the arguments which someone advances to prove or disprove that existence. God's existence or non-existence does

not depend on human belief or denial. God can logically exist or not exist, regardless of whether everyone affirmed or denied His existence.

Since God's existence or non-existence does not depend on us, this should prove to be quite humbling to both theists and atheists alike. Atheists are quite irrational when they announce that God does not exist because they feel they have refuted some particular theistic argument. What they fail to understand is that refuting a theistic argument, set forth by someone, does not logically negate the existence of God. It is totally irrational to think that it does.

Theists also need to be reminded that God does not exist just because they think they can *prove* that He exists. God's existence is not dependent on their ability to demonstrate it to those who do not want it demonstrated.

A Modern Illustration

When the early explorers from Australia described an animal which lived in the water, had the bill of a duck, the fur of a beaver, laid eggs, and was a mammal, such claims were dismissed as "unthinkable" by European rationalists. Even when some skins of this animal were brought to Europe, they were denounced as clumsy frauds.

Obviously, someone had sewed together various parts from different animals. It was not until someone brought to Europe a live animal that it was grudgingly admitted that such a creature actually existed.

What is germane to our point is that while the arguments raged back and forth in Europe as to whether or not such an animal existed, the duckbilled platypus blissfully continued its life of ease because its existence did not depend on whether Europeans believed in him or not.

Principle #2

If some or all of the theistic arguments presented by one particular author are discovered to be weak or invalid, this cannot logically decide the issue of God's existence. Since there are thousands of books, in which different authors present many different kinds of arguments for the existence of God, it is irrational to assume that if you have answered one of them you have answered them all.

Principle #3

Theists are not limited to the five inductive arguments formulated by the medieval theologian, Thomas Aquinas. Atheists need to take special

note of this fact for they seem to be trapped in a time warp, continually harping on Aquinas' five arguments. Once they have, at least in their own mind, refuted the way Aquinas formulated his arguments, they have the nasty habit of declaring "God is dead," or some other equally obnoxious nonsense.

Why should theism be limited to the formulations of Aquinas? Why ignore the arguments for God's existence set forth by other Christian apologists? After all, philosophy did not begin or end with Aquinas.

Principle #4

All arguments are not created equal. Some of them are good and some of them are bad. Some are weak and others strong. Some are logically valid and others invalid. Some are smart and some are stupid.

Down through the years, theists and atheists alike have given some really poor arguments to prove their case. For example, the argument that "Something is true if you believe it" is just as absurd as saying, "Something is false if you disbelieve it." Reality does not have to conform to what you think it is.

The Praying Atheist

An atheist told me that God did not exist because he had prayed and God did not answer him. On the basis of his unanswered prayer, he concluded that God did not exist.

I pointed out to him that his argument was logically invalid. Besides, his bogus attempt to take his particular experience and turn it into a universal truth, there could be other explanations as to why God did not give him what he wanted. For example, the Bible says that God will not hear the prayers of the wicked (Prov. 28:9). Thus, his unanswered prayer actually *proved* that God exists!

Principle #5

The nature of the God, whose existence you are attempting to demonstrate, determines the nature of that demonstration.

If you are seeking to demonstrate the existence of a white crocodile, who is worshipped as a deity in a certain Hindu temple in India, a trip to that temple to see this crocodile is logically in order. That is, the existence of a finite material being, in this case a white crocodile, can be empirically demonstrated through the five senses. If you can see, hear, smell, touch and taste the crocodile, at least you know, in an

empirical way, that it does, in fact, exist. A material demonstration is therefore all you need to prove the existence of a material creature.

But, if the God in question is an infinite spirit without any material nature, then it would be logically invalid to demand an empirical demonstration. Thus, when atheists demand that they must see, touch, weigh and measure God before they will believe in Him, they are irrational.

This is why Christian theists have produced so many *rational* arguments for the existence of God. Belief in the existence of an immaterial God will generate immaterial proofs.

Principle #6

Any proof which falls short of demonstrating the existence of the personal and infinite God of the Bible is only as good as far as it takes you.

If you hire a taxi to take you to the airport, but it drops you off one mile from the airport, the ride was good only as far it got you. But it still fell short of reaching the goal.

In the same way, any argument for the existence of God which “drops you off,” before you arrive at the infinite, personal, triune God of the Bible, falls short of reaching the goal. It may be good, as far as it takes you, but it does not quite reach the goal.

For example, many theists argue that every effect requires a cause equal to or greater than the effect. From this premise, they argue that the entire universe is one vast effect which needs an even greater cause. Of course, this cause can only be God.

What they fail to understand is that the first premise actually says that every *finite* effect requires a *finite* cause equal to or greater than the effect. A finite universe will therefore only require a finite cause equal to or greater than the universe. Thus, the argument from cause and effect does not take us all the way to an infinite God. It actually “drops us off” at a very powerful finite god just large enough to create the universe.

Now, this does not logically mean that an infinite cause could not have created the finite universe. Any atheist who makes that claim is irrational. It just means that, logically speaking, a finite effect does not require an infinite cause. A finite cause is sufficient.

By the way, atheists should not take any comfort from this observation. Just because the taxi did not take us all the way to the airport does not “prove” that the airport does not exist! In the same way, just because the argument from cause and effect does not take us all the way to an infinite,

personal, triune God does not prove that He does not exist. But it at least gets us going in the right direction.

One other point must be raised. In several debates with atheists, I have deliberately used the cause and effect argument for God's existence just to hear the atheist say, "The cause and effect argument can only prove that a finite god exists." I stop them at this point and point out that they are admitting the existence of a finite god which means that they are no longer atheists! A finite god powerful enough to create the universe is certainly powerful enough to deal with the likes of them!

Principle #7

One argument that is logically valid is the method which asks the question, "What must be in order for what is to be what it is?" This method begins with what exists. Then it asks, "What must also exist in order for what is to be what it is?" The following examples may help us at this point.

The Unseen Heat Source

If the outside temperature is zero degrees but the inside temperature of a house is seventy degrees, then there must be an artificial source of heat in that house somewhere. What "is," is the given truth of physics that the temperature in the house would be the same as the temperature outside the house, unless there is an independent heat source in that house. What "must be" is an artificial source of heat. Otherwise the house would be zero degrees as well.

When I begin to look around the house, I already know that I will eventually find a fire place, a wood stove, an oil furnace, steam heat, electric heat, a kerosene stove, etc. *Before* I find the heat source, I already know that, "given" the laws of physics, it "must" exist because it "must be" in order "for what is to be what it is."

The Unseen Neighbor

A friend who lives down the street tells you that someone has moved into the vacant house across the street from you. You ask him how does he know that someone has moved into the house. For example, has he seen him? He admits that, although he has never seen him, he knows that he has moved into the house.

When you ask him on what grounds he bases his belief, he argues that, if someone were living in that house, certain things would be also true.

For example, if someone were living in that house, you would expect to find the mailbox emptied every day, the lawn mowed, lights going on and off, the newspaper delivered, the occasional noise of a TV or radio, and bags of garbage put out on the street for trash removal, etc.

You argue that none of those things, in and of themselves, prove that someone is living in that house. Someone may be stealing the mail out of the box every day! Or, some kid is mowing the lawn and picking up the newspapers. The lights and the radio go off and on according to an electric timer. In short, you give alternate explanations for each argument set forth by your friend. Every time he gives you another "evidence" you respond, "Oh, I can explain that away."

While none of the "evidences" by themselves "prove" that someone is living in the house, at some point the accumulative weight of all the evidences put together overwhelms your skepticism and, finally, you admit that someone must be living in that house even though you have never seen him.

Your friend was operating on the question, "What must be in order for what is to be what it is?" If someone were living in that house, and that is the "given," then certain things would naturally follow. In other words, you would expect to find certain things to be true.

For example, if someone were living in that house, you would expect to see garbage bags sitting out on the street Tuesday mornings. Why? You are assuming *a priori* that people generate garbage. Thus, it did not surprise you to find bags of garbage sitting in front of that house.

While alternate explanations can "explain away" this or that particular argument, when you put all the evidences together, only a fool would deny that someone was living in that house.

We will now illustrate the analytic *a priori* deductive methodology which we will be following in this book by applying the question, "What must be in order for what is to be what it is?" to the existence of God.

The Universe Around Us

If we *begin* with the God of the Bible as our *a priori*, what kind of universe would we expect to find? For example, given the biblical doctrine of Creation, we would expect to find that the universe is *not* an illusion as some Eastern religions claim. The existence of the universe is one of those things which "must be" in order for God's existence "to be what it is."

There is a great deal of evidence that the universe is not an illusion. The fact that we can predict when a certain comet will pass the earth or

the fact that we can land someone on the moon are the kinds of things that would be true if the universe is real and not an illusion.

Or again, since, according to the Bible, God alone is eternal and self-existent, we would expect to find that the universe is decaying and dependent. In other words, we can deduce from the given of God's existence that when we investigate the world around us, we discover that the universe:

1. is finite and not infinite,
2. had a beginning and will have an end,
3. is not eternal or self-created,
4. is decaying and is not self-renewing,
5. is imperfect,
6. manifests order and not chaos,
7. is predictable and not random,
8. manifests design and not chance,
9. shows that life only comes from life and not from non-life,
10. reveals unity and diversity on all levels,
11. manifests the personal as well as the non-personal.

The observations of science, the laws of logic, and personal experience demonstrate that, in order for the universe to be eternal, in one form or the other, it would have to be infinite, autonomous, self-renewing, and perfect. But the presence of rust, super-novas and the energy crisis is sufficient to prove that the universe is finite, dependent, imperfect and decaying. For example, given the rate at which the sun gives off its energy, it could not be eternal, self-renewing or infinite. It will cool off and collapse one day.

The point is that, if we begin with God as our *a priori*, we can deduce from this that the universe will exist in a certain way as opposed to existing another way or not at all. And, when we examine the universe, lo and behold, it is exactly the kind of universe that we deduced that "must be" in order for God's existence "to be what it is."

The analytic *a priori* deductive method states that "the existence of the God of the Bible explains why the universe exists in a certain form." Since God exists, then we would expect to find that the form of the universe will reflect the nature of the God who made it. Thus it should manifest intelligence, emotion, will, humor, order, design, purpose, personality, etc.

Mankind

Beginning with the existence of God as our *a priori*, we can deduce from this that, since man is created in the image of God, we should find that man:

1. is aware of his own existence,
2. values his own existence,
3. questions his own existence,
4. is aware of the existence of others,
5. values the existence of others,
6. questions the existence of others,
7. makes moral judgments on himself and on others,
8. aspires to truth, justice, morals, beauty, meaning, significance, dignity and worth,
9. does horrible and wicked things to himself and to others,
10. makes and appreciates art,
11. is aware of God or gods,
12. assumes that his soul or mind survives the death of the body.

Can chance, plus matter, plus time explain what man is? No. A non-personal, non-rational, non-moral, and non-aesthetic Origin for the personal, rational, moral and aesthetic nature of man is logically and scientifically impossible.

The existence of the God of the Bible requires that man exists in a certain way. And, when we look at man, he is exactly what we would expect him to be, if he were created in the image of God.

But we hasten to add that the same Bible also tells us that this image has been marred by man's fall into sin and guilt (Gen. 3:1-15). Thus, we would also expect to find that man reflects a sinful nature as well as the glory of God. And, when we look around us, man is exactly the flawed creature that the Bible describes him to be.

Science

Since God exists and He made man in His own image, then science is exactly what we would expect to find. Why? Science presupposes an intelligible universe. But this is only possible, if it is the product of a higher Intelligence. This is why it is perfectly natural for us to ask:

1. What is the purpose of this?
2. What does it do?

3. What is it for?
4. Of what value is it?
5. How does it work?
6. What role does it play in the environment?

If the universe were simply the product of chance, plus matter, plus time, then science would have never developed because the universe would be random and without design or purpose. In short, the universe would be unintelligible due to its contingent nature. No one would ask about the purpose of something, if the universe were purposeless. No one would be amazed at the design of things, if the universe were random.

We assume that we can figure things out because everything has a purpose and a manifest design. We assume that things do not “just happen,” but that they have a cause and an explanation. Thus, the existence of science is a monument to the existence of the God who created an intelligible universe.

Morality

Since God exists, then we would expect to find that man is a moral being who makes moral judgments according to a moral code that exists independent of his approval or disapproval. The non-moral cannot be the Origin of the moral. Without God as the infinite reference point and, thus, the Origin of truth, morality is impossible.

Beauty

Since God exists and He made man in His own image, then the existence of beauty and art is exactly what we would expect to find. Aesthetics is possible only if we assume God's existence as the Great Artist. True beauty is in the eye of the Beholder of all things because God is the measure of all things including beauty.

This answers the old question, “Is a flower in the desert beautiful even though no man ever sees it?” Since the God who created it sees it, it is beautiful, regardless of whether man ever sees it.

Meaning

That people naturally strive to find meaning to their existence and the things around them is exactly what we would expect to find if we *begin* with God.

Particulars cannot have meaning without an infinite reference point. If you begin with man as the measure of all things and attempt, inductively, to find a sufficient basis for truth, justice, morality, beauty or meaning, you will fail because that which is finite and relative by nature, can never become infinite and absolute by nature just because you want it so.

Principle #8

This last observation is quite simple. You may lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink! In other words, if someone does not WANT to believe in God, he will never CHOOSE to believe no matter how much solid evidence you set before him.

No one is born an atheist. It is something you choose to believe. Most of the time, it means that you have chosen not to believe in God because He did not do what you wanted Him to do. Since the vast majority of human beings have always believed in some kind of deity, atheism must be viewed as a psychological aberration.

There are many reasons why people choose not to believe in God—unanswered prayer, failure in attaining personal goals, hatred of God, rebellion against parents or authority figures, Marxist ideology, immorality, drugs, family pressure, etc.⁸

The Trinity

How is this method applicable to the doctrine of the Trinity? If we begin with the Trinity as an *a priori* concept, then we must ask ourselves, if the Trinity is true, what kinds of things should we expect to find in the Bible? Then, if we go to the Bible and we do in fact find those very things which “must be” in order for the Trinity “to be what it is,” then we have all the proof we need that the Trinity doctrine is true.

The only alternative is to begin with the *a priori* assumption that the Trinity is not true. While we can understand why the non-Christian would want to begin with this as his *a priori*, why would a professing Christian want to start there as well? To begin with unbelief is to lose the battle before it starts.

Conclusion

“What must be in order for what is to be what it is?” is a question which provides a solid method by which we can discover the truth. We will begin where the biblical authors began—with the *a priori* of God as the Origin of truth, justice, meaning, morals and beauty.

Notes

1. Both Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, London: Clarke, 1960, 1:1-17, and B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of The Bible*, Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1964), 205-206, promoted the use of the inductive method in theology. William Sanday's article "Retrospect and Results: The Traditional and Inductive Views of Inspiration Compared," *Inspiration: Eight Lectures* (London: Longmans, Green, 1903) did more to undermine the inerrancy of Scripture in the Church of England than any other work in the early part of the 20th century.

2. The inherent conflict between the inductive and deductive methodologies came to the surface during the controversy over the inerrancy of the Bible beginning in the late 1970's. The following is a brief bibliography on the issue:

Beegle, Dewey M., *Scripture, Tradition and Infallibility* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 16f.

Carson, D.A., "Three Books on the Bible: A Critical Review," (*JETS*, 26, 3, September, 1983), 337f.

Feinberg, Paul, "The Meaning of Inerrancy," *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 265-304, 468-471.

Geisler, Norman, "Philosophical Presuppositions of Biblical Errancy," in *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 308f.

——— "Inductivism, Materialism and Rationalism," in *Biblical Errancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 11-22.

Habermas, Gary, "Skepticism: Hume" in *Biblical Errancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 28.

Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986).

Holmes, Arthur, "Ordinary Language Analysis and Theological Method" (*Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 11, 1968), 131f.

Nicole, Roger, "Induction and Deduction With Reference To Inspiration," *Soli Deo Gloria: Essays In Reformed Theology, Festschrift For John H. Gerstner* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976), 95-102.

Obitts, Stanley, "A Philosophical Analysis of Certain Assumptions of the Doctrine of the Inerrancy of the Bible" (*JETS*, 26:2, June 1983), 129-1360.

Packer, J.I., "Hermeneutics and Biblical Authority," *Themelios* 1:1 (Autumn 1975), 3f.

Rogers, Jack, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 35f, 172f.

3. Carl F. Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief* (Wheaton: Crossways, 1990), 37-38.

4. Ibid., 63.

5. Ibid., 66.

6. Ibid., 66.

7. Ibid., 67.

8. For development of this point, see Robert A. Morey, *The New Atheism and the Erosion of Freedom* (Phillipsburg, PA: P & R, 1995).

Chapter Two

The Hermeneutics of God

While the battle between Christianity and humanism, theism and atheism, faith and unbelief remains the same, the battlefield has shifted from the doctrinal to the pre-doctrinal, the theological to the philosophical, the theoretical to the pre-theoretical, the precepts to the presuppositions, the biblical to the pre-biblical, and from exegesis to hermeneutics.

Most modern humanistic theologians are no longer interested in the careful exegesis of Scripture for several reasons. First, they assume that it is impossible to get back to the original text of Scripture.¹ In other words, no one *can* really know for sure what Jesus or the apostles actually did or said. They do not trust the Gospels or the Epistles because they assume that the New Testament is fraudulent in content as well as in authorship.

Second, they also assume that if, by some kind of miracle, we could get back to the original text, it would not do us any good because it is impossible to know what the authors of the Bible meant by their words.

Subjectivistic hermeneutics such as deconstructionism and contextualism, in which the interpreter is encouraged to “enter into” and “interact with” the meaning of the text, actually destroys any hope of discovering what the author was saying. In effect, they have reduced theology to psychology and anthropology. “What does the text say to me in the matrix of my own personal experience?” is the only politically correct hermeneutic today.

Humanistic theologians are no longer interested in debating whose revelation is “true” because they assume that there are no “true” revelations; that all religions are subjective and relative; and that an objective, propositional, special revelation from a personal, infinite, triune God is simply not possible. The Bible has been reduced to the level of the Muslim Qur’an and the Hindu Vedas. Pay your nickel and take your choice because none of them are really “true” in the objective sense. If a religion makes you happy, it is subjectively true for you. But never forget that one man’s truth is another man’s lie.

Given the humanistic context of modern theology, it is no surprise to find that it has already been decided, on pre-biblical grounds, that the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be objectively “true.” Thus the Trinity is

summarily dismissed by shouting it down with cries of "illogical," "incoherent" or "out of the question." This cavalier approach to theology is the product of an *a priori* commitment to a relativistic epistemology in which man is the measure of all things including God.

Western Philosophy

It is this humanistic assumption which has led to the death of meaning not only in philosophy, but also in theology. In the history of Western philosophy, the meaning of things was first thought to exist above in the world of ideas. The meaning was then brought down to earth and mixed with the object itself. Thus, you had to grasp the essence of an object from within that object.

Then it was assumed that meaning was in the object and in the human mind at the same time. When the two came into contact with each other, knowledge happened. But it was not long before it was suggested that meaning was entirely in the mind of the beholder and not in the ideas above or in the objects below.

Once meaning was reduced to man's mind, humanistic philosophers came to the conclusion that all is subjective and relative to the beholder. There is no truth to discover, no meaning to find, no morality to follow and no justice to establish. Western philosophy has gone from Plato to Aristotle to Leibniz to Kant to Sartre and ended in the abyss of meaninglessness.

Since humanism starts with man as the Origin, it has never been able to break free from the shackles of its own inherent relativism. This is why the denial of meaning, truth, morals, justice, beauty, dignity and significance has become the new orthodoxy and any attempt to sustain any absolutes in any field is vigorously attacked as "incoherent" or "reactionary."

The Collapse of Liberalism

This is also why liberal theology has collapsed within itself. In the nineteenth century, the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man were viewed as absolute truths. But liberalism today does not claim to hold to any absolutes. The feminist's vicious attack on the *Fatherhood* of God and the brotherhood of *man*, has destroyed the old liberal ideals as well as the basis of their social gospel.

Modern theology does not really have a clue as to who or what God is. Bereft of any special revelation from their god or gods or goddesses, they have become quite schizophrenic. They pride themselves on being

"non-judgmental" and claim that they do not believe in putting down any theological system as "false" because they do not believe that any system is "true." Yet, while they *say* that they do not judge other belief systems, they turn right around and attack the Bible and those who believe in it! This blatant hypocrisy needs to be pointed out to them.

If the feminists, the witches, the Marxists, the gays, etc., all can define God anyway they want, why is it that evangelicals are condemned for believing in the triune God of the Bible? If the feminists can pray to a mother god, why are evangelicals condemned for praying to God the Father?

Any concept of God is allowable in liberal circles today except for *biblical* concepts such as the Trinity and the deity of Christ. This has resulted in utter chaos where feminist, Marxist, homosexual, existentialist, occultic, liberationist, pagan, and process theologians will not be bound by any absolutes, not even by "liberal" ones.

Human Autonomy

Once the *a priori* humanistic doctrine of human autonomy is granted, then it does not really matter what anyone thinks or says about God because all of theology has been reduced to mere god-talk. If someone wants to define "God" as a lesbian, black, Marxist, so be it. Theological fads come and go so fast in liberal circles today that it has become a veritable "god of the month" club.

Evangelical Theology

The last bastion where objective and absolute meaning can be found is in Evangelical theology. Evangelicals believe that it *is* possible to find the objective "true" meaning of a given text of Scripture by following the rules of grammar and syntax combined with the literary context and style of the passage and the historical, cultural context of the author. There will be only one true interpretation of a text which faithfully expounds what the author was saying. All other interpretations are false.

Evangelical beliefs are based upon the *a priori* assumption that the personal, infinite, triune God revealed in the Bible actually exists and that He has spoken to man in human language. As the late Francis Schaeffer put it, "He is there and is not silent."

We begin our hermeneutic with "the God of the Bible" because God and the Bible cannot be separated from each other. The only way we can explain God is through the Bible and the only way we can explain the Bible is through God. Anyone who thinks that he can begin with either

God or the Bible conceived apart from each other has not thought very deeply on the subject.

This hermeneutical circle is not unique to Christian theology. The humanist begins with "man and the world" as his hermeneutical circle. The only way he can explain man is through the world and the only way he can explain the world is through man. Can humanists explain the world without recourse to their own perception of and experience in the world? No.

Hermeneutical objectivity flows out of, and is based upon, God's objectivity as the transcendent Origin of meaning. God is infinite and absolute and, thus, not relative in any sense. His knowledge, power and presence are *omni*-attributes because they do not have any beginning or end.²

Because God is outside of, transcendent above, sovereign over, and immanent within the space/time universe, He cannot be contextualized within a human culture even when He acts within that culture as a true historical agent. In other words, God maintains His transcendence even when He is immanent. He is the sovereign Lord *of* history as well as the sovereign Lord *in* history.

When God used human words to reveal His Mind and Will to man, He was not limiting Himself because He was using those words which He had sovereignly put into place for that purpose. Nothing was left up to chance. God sovereignly directed all the details of the lives of the authors of Scripture "from [the] womb" (Gal. 1:15). Their concepts and constructs, personality and peculiarities, vocabulary and education, cultural norms and customs—all these things were pre-arranged and ordered by the God who acts and speaks. He prepared the culture of the prophet as well as the prophet of the culture to be the perfect vehicle for His revelation.

The Covenant

It was not by chance that the concept of "covenant" had already developed in the culture surrounding Abraham before he was born. God sovereignly guided that culture to develop the concept of the covenant because He was going to reveal His covenant to Abraham. The sovereignty of God guarantees that the recipients of revelation are always properly prepared to understand what is going to be revealed to them.

Not by Chance

God's revelation was not limited to what Lady Luck or chance had created in Abraham's culture. There is no chance or luck. The Lord was not surprised to find the concept of covenant and exclaim, "Oh, this is a neat idea! I think I will use it." It was the other way around. The culture

was guided by divine Providence to develop the concept of covenant because that is what God wanted to reveal to Abraham.

The Birth of Christ

Did the birth of Christ happen on schedule according to a divine master plan? Was it by chance that Christ came to this world when the universal language was Greek? Or, that the New Testament was written in Greek instead of Hebrew? Or, that Rome had built roads throughout the empire which made the spread of the Gospel possible? Or, that the *Pax Romana* made traveling safe? Or, are all these things just a “lucky” coincidence?

According to Galatians 4:4., Christ came to this world “in the fullness of time” when everything including the culture with its language and customs had been prepared by Providence to be the best vehicle for the proclamation and spread of the gospel.

Evangelical theologians are not upset when a liberal theologian points out that some of the concepts found in the gospel can be found in pre-Christian culture. This is what evangelicals expect to find because God always prepares the ground before sowing the seed. He will have put in place the language, customs, religious doctrines, and philosophic terminology and concepts which He wants to use to reveal His mind to man.

It is apparent by now that there is a philosophic framework of *a priori* ideas that form the context of hermeneutics. Both the Christian and the humanist operate their hermeneutics within the framework of certain preconceived ideas and assumptions. This is why a humanist and a Christian will often have totally different interpretations of the same text. There is more to hermeneutics than parsing verbs.

Exact Opposites

The following diagram contrasts the hermeneutical framework of the humanist with the hermeneutical framework of the Christian.³ The reader will soon discover on which side of the ledger he falls

The Humanist *A Priori*

Man starting from and by himself without any outside information can understand himself and the world around him.

The Christian *A Priori*

God has revealed to us in the Bible the information we need to understand ourselves and the world around us.

The Humanist *A Priori*

Man is the measure of all things, including God.

Man created god in his own image.

If God actually exists, he, she, or it is unknowable.

Theology is the study of man's feelings, hopes, wishes, and fears.

All concepts of God are relative, subjective, cultural, and existential. No concept is true or false.

The word "God" can mean whatever you need to find self-fulfillment.

All religions are "true" to the degree they satisfy the psychological and social needs of those who believe in them.

Everything is relative. There are no absolutes. Man is accountable only to himself.

History is an evolutionary chance-driven process which does not follow any predetermined plan or path.

History has no meaning other than what man projects upon it.

All beliefs arise from the surrounding culture which is the product of meaningless chance. Thus all beliefs are meaningless.

The Bible is guilty until proven innocent.

The Christian *A Priori*

God is the measure of all things, including man.

God created man in His own image.

We can know God because He has revealed Himself.

Theology is the study of God's self-disclosure in Scripture.

To think of God in any other way than how He has revealed Himself in Scripture is idolatry.

There is but one true God. All other gods are false.

Christianity is the one true religion. All other religions are false and idolatrous.

God has revealed in Scripture the absolutes by which He will judge us one day.

All things happen according to the will and predetermined plan of God. Things do not happen by chance.

Everything has meaning and significance because it is a part of God's plan of the ages.

Christianity is not derived from culture, but from Christ. Its source is special revelation and, thus, it has meaning.

The Bible is innocent until proven guilty.

The Humanist *A Priori*

The Bible is not inspired anymore than the Qur'an or the Vedas.

We must get "behind" the text of the Bible to the psychological makeup and experience of those who wrote it.

We must project our own subjective feelings into the text to understand what the text is saying to us today.

The Bible is fraudulent in its claim of authorship. Moses did not write the Pentateuch, Isaiah did not write Isaiah, Daniel did not write Daniel, etc.

The Gospels were written by early Christians as a witness to what the word "Jesus" meant to them in the context of their lives.

The Gospels do not tell us anything about the historical Jesus.

The Gospels are fictional in nature and contain myths and legends created by the early Christian community as a faith response to their existential encounter with the Other. We need to "get behind" those myths to get to the historical Jesus.

All attempts to "get behind" the Gospels to the real Jesus have failed. No one knows anything about the historical Jesus.

The Christian *A Priori*

The Bible is the inspired Word of God and all other books, such as the Qur'an, are false in content and satanic in origin.

We must not venture beyond the text into wild speculations as to who was feeling what. To psychologize the Bible is to corrupt it.

The meaning of the text lies in the text itself and not in the interpreter.

The Bible was written by the authors assigned to each book. Moses wrote the Pentateuch, Isaiah wrote Isaiah, etc.

The Gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The Gospels tell us who the historical Jesus was and what He said and did.

The Gospels give us a true historical account of the birth, life, ministry, teaching, miracles, death, burial and resurrection of Christ. There are no legends or myths in the Gospels.

The historical Jesus is revealed in the Gospels. We can know who Jesus is only by the Bible.

The Humanist *A Priori*

If Jesus existed, He did not think of Himself as the Messiah or as God and He did not claim such to His disciples.

Jesus was "divine" only in the same sense in which we are all divine.

Jesus was mistaken on many things. For example, He thought that the end of the world would happen in his day.

The apostles mistakenly believed that the end of the world would take place in their life-time.

If someone uses the terminology of contemporary philosophies to express his ideas, then those ideas actually come from those contemporary philosophies. Common terms imply common ideas and origins.

Since the early Church used Platonic terminology in its creeds, it derived its concept of the Trinity from Plato instead of from the Bible.

Paul created Christianity out of the pagan Greek mystery religions.

The attributes of man determine the attributes of god. What man is, God can be. What man is not, God cannot be.

The Christian *A Priori*

Jesus knew that He was both God and Christ. He taught His disciples that He was such.

Jesus Christ was the only incarnation of deity.

As incarnate deity, Jesus was not mistaken on anything. He did not teach that the end of the world would happen in His life-time.

While the return of Christ *could* take place, the apostles never claimed that it *would* definitely take place in their life-time.

You can use contemporary terminology while deriving your ideas elsewhere. It is a logical fallacy to think that common terms means common ideas or origins.

Early Christians used those contemporary terms which best expressed the teachings of Scripture. They did not derive their ideas of God from Plato, but from the Bible.

Paul did not derive the Gospel from the mystery religions. God revealed it to him through special revelation.

We must not make the error of thinking that God is like us.

The Humanist *A Priori*

Christianity as a religion was not created by Jesus but by Paul. If Jesus were alive today, he would not be a Christian but a Jew.

Since god is created in the image of man, no god should be conceived of as being greater or better than man or as having greater capabilities than man.

Since man is personal and finite, then God must be finite and personal.

Since man is not a person or being but only a process, then God must be a process as well.

Since man cannot know or control the future, then God cannot know or control the future.

Since man is not omniscient, omnipotent, immutable or perfect, then neither is God.

Since any god which man creates would be comprehensible to the man who created him, the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God is false.

The Christian *A Priori*

Christianity is the religion based upon the person and work of Christ as interpreted by the apostles. There is no conflict between what Jesus and Paul taught.

God is better and greater than man in all respects. Any god made by man is not worthy of respect or worship.

God is both personal and infinite at the same time.

God is a perfect Being and not just a process. The continuity of God's Being is the basis of His personhood.

God both knows and controls the future.

The one true God is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, immutable and perfect. Any god less than this is not GOD.

God is incomprehensible in the sense of man's not being able fully to understand or explain God. Any god that we could fully understand and explain would be less than what we are and hence no God at all.

These Contrasts Are Real

If anyone doubts that liberal theologians today actually believe and teach what is stated on the above chart, all they have to do is to read the

magazine articles on Jesus which usually show up around Easter and Christmas. One example is the April 4, 1994 edition of *Newsweek* magazine which featured a special edition on Jesus. In the section dealing with the "Jesus Seminar," we are told that these seventy-seven liberal theologians:

... believe that the Biblical Jesus was a myth created by church-building Christians decades after the Crucifixion. The *real* Jesus, many of them, say, was no more the child of God than anyone else. He was a Jewish peasant—possibly not the firstborn in his family and probably illiterate⁴

The members of the Seminar believe and teach that the Gospels are untrustworthy because they are fictional in nature and do not represent the real historical Jesus. Thus, they have to get "behind" the Gospels to find the "real" Jesus. But, at the same time, they acknowledge that no one will ever find the historical Jesus and, thus, everyone is free to make up any "Jesus" they want.

This is why the members of the "Jesus Seminar" have conflicting views as to who Jesus really was. Some teach the "sage Jesus" view while others proclaim the "apocalyptic Jesus" view. Some fight for the "Marxist Jesus" while others hold the "rabbi Jesus" view. But in the end, they all looked into the well of their own soul and as soon as they saw their own reflection, they cried out, "I have found the real Jesus!"

It is also clear that the humanist position actually contradicts itself on numerous occasions. For example, after dogmatically saying that no one can really know anything about the historical Jesus, the typical liberal theologian will turn right around and state that the historical Jesus did not claim to be God or Christ! Liberals have an unbounded capacity for self-contradiction on such issues.

A History of God

Another example of the liberal capacity for the absurd as well as the heretical can be found in Karen Armstrong's book, *A History Of God* (New York: Knopf, 1993). She dogmatically states that all the gods of all religions are simply the product of an overactive imagination.

Now, if, as Armstrong claims, all gods are created equal and, thus, it is perfectly proper for feminists to worship a mother goddess or for the Muslims to worship Allah, then one would expect that she would extend this same right to Christians to worship the triune God of the Father, the

Son and the Holy Spirit. But her vicious attack on the Christian God reveals that any god or goddess will do *except* the Christian God!

We must also point out that her hatred of Christianity is also fueled by her naive love of Islam. In fact, her enthusiasm for Islam is so strong that the Muslims have granted her an honorary membership in the Muslim Association of Muslim Social Scientists! Of course, the readers of her book are not told of this hidden Islamic agenda.⁵

Evangelical Hermeneutics

Evangelical theologians use the historical, grammatical method in their exegesis of Scripture.⁶ They do not attempt to “get behind” the text, not only because all such attempts have proven futile, but also because the text is what God has revealed.

Evangelicals are not interested in demythologizing, deconstructing or psychologizing the text because any attempt to do so would destroy what God has revealed in the text of Scripture. When the Christian looks at Scripture, he is not seeing his own reflection as in a mirror. He is meditating upon the revealed mind and will of God.

This is the exact opposite of what goes on in modern liberal theology. When modern theologians look into the well of their own feelings and ideas about what the word “Jesus” means to them, the only thing they see is their own reflection in the water. This is why the Afro-centric theologian sees a black Jesus, the Asian-centric theologian sees an oriental Jesus, the New Age theologian sees a New Age Christ, the liberation theologian sees a Marxist Jesus and the Process theologian sees a struggling finite deity in the process of becoming what no one knows, not even God. They have all committed the supreme blasphemy of identifying and worshipping their own reflection as God and Christ.

The True Nature of Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the discovery, understanding, and use of those linguistic and literary principles which should be followed when seeking to understand what an author is saying to his readers. Exegesis is the skill of “digging out,” from the text itself, what the author was saying to his readers. It is in exegesis where the parsing of verbs takes place.

The opposite of exegesis is eisegesis which is the projection of your own feelings and ideas into the text. For example, when liberals describe what Paul was feeling in his heart as he left Lystra, they are only saying what *they* would have felt if *they* had been in Paul’s shoes. But once

again, the liberal is only seeing his own reflection at the bottom of the well.

Hermeneutics is the study and use of those principles of interpretation which we all follow whenever we read any piece of literature. When we read a newspaper, magazine or the Bible, we do the following:

1. observe the grammar and syntax in the text,
2. follow paragraph and chapter divisions,
3. seek to understand what the author is saying to whom.

Since there can be conflicting interpretations of any given piece of literature, either one interpretation is true and all the others are false, or they are all false. But they cannot all be true.

Twisting the Scriptures

False interpretations usually arise because the reader is not paying attention to the text. Thus, the authors of Scripture warn their readers not to twist what they were saying (II Pet. 3:16). Twisting Scripture is effected by doing the following:

1. quoting only a portion of a verse or passage,
2. not observing who said what to whom,
3. putting together texts which have no relationship to each other,
4. failing to observe the context,
5. not observing the punctuation,
6. failing to observe verb tenses,
7. not paying attention to capital or lower case letters.

The Bible cannot be interpreted just anyway one wants. This is not how we treat other literature. The Bible should be subject only to those normal rules of interpretation which we all follow when reading any piece of literature. No special rules should be used which, if applied to any other, ancient or modern literature, would be disastrous.

The Example of Jesus

When incarnate Deity picked up the Bible and interpreted it on the basis of grammar and syntax (Matt. 22:23-33), this is how we are to interpret the Bible (I John 2:6). To dismiss how Jesus interpreted the Bible as "rabbinical," does not solve the issue of how *we* are to interpret

the Bible. On what grounds do modern theologians assume that Marx or Freud is a better interpreter of Scripture than the Lord Jesus Christ ?

The Example of the Apostles

The way the apostles interpreted the Bible cannot be brushed aside in the name of contextualism because they interpreted the Scriptures under the infallible inspiration of the Holy Spirit who was not bound by the space/time continuum or by any human culture (II Pet. 1:21). In hermeneutics, as well, in epistemology, God is the Origin of truth and the measure of all things.

The only logical alternative to the relativizing, humanistic principle of man as the measure of all things is the biblical principle that God is the measure of things. Everyone begins either with man or with God. There is no middle ground. There is no compromise. It is one way or the other.

The Mind of God

What is so exciting is the truth that we *can* discover the mind and will of God by exegeting the text of Scripture. It is this glorious thought that makes Evangelical theology so dynamic and life-changing.

As we explore the pages of Scriptures, we are not merely reading some dead guy's ideas of what he thought God was. No, we are actually exploring the revealed mind of God and Christ (I Cor. 2:16). And as we do this, we come into contact with the life-altering power of Almighty God (Rom. 1:16).

The task of the interpreter is thus to exegete what the author was saying. In other words, a noun is a noun regardless of the race, creed or religion of the interpreter of Scripture.

Eisegesis

Eisegesis is the opposite of exegesis. It is the literary *error* of attempting to read your own ideas, feelings, and experience into the text. It is a manifestation of the psychological illness of projecting your own problems, fears, doubts, and ideas to other people—in this case the authors of Scripture. In its worst form, eisegesis is found in the present popular fictionalized novels of biblical times in which the modern author describes in great detail what Moses or Paul was thinking or feeling as he did this or that. But can we really “get into the head of” the authors of the Bible? No! What we call “theology” today may be nothing more than self-analysis.

In the same way, most of modern theology is nothing more than a fictional account of what God ought to be according to the psychological or philosophical problems of the author. They do not ask, "What is God according to the Bible?", but, "What is God according to *me*?"

In opposition to this fictional approach to truth, Evangelical theologians want to know what the apostle Paul believed about justification because God's revelation on justification is to be found in Paul's discussion of it. Paul's words were both his words and God's Words at the same time. Revelation is simply thinking God's thoughts after Him.

Self-Refuting Hermeneutics

Any hermeneutical theory which cuts its own throat is doomed. This applies to those linguistic philosophers who claim in their books that it is not possible to understand what an author is saying in his book. Why don't they ever apply what they are saying to their own books?

The same holds true for contextualists and deconstructionists. They always strenuously object when you apply their theory to their own books and lectures. When you deconstruct the deconstructionists and contextualize the contextualists, they are the first ones to claim that their theory is objectively true while maintaining at the same time that no theory is objectively true! It is just as self-refuting as those who say that there are no absolutes.

The Cultic Hermeneutic

We also reject the typical cultic hermeneutic in which the cult leader has a private pipeline to God. Cult leaders often claim that they receive revelations, angelic visitations, visions and dreams which reveal to them the "secret" meaning of Scripture. They assert that they alone have the "key" to unlock the mysteries of the Scriptures. It is, thus, no surprise that most of the interpretations which cultist leaders come up with have nothing to do with the grammar or the context of the text.

It does not matter if it is Joseph Smith, Ellen G. White, David Koresh or the Watchtower Society, the *claim* of infallibility is not enough. We demand to be shown the chapter and the verse, the grammar and the syntax, the context and the culture of a passage. Anything less than this is not a valid hermeneutic.

No Keys Needed

Furthermore, the Bible does not need any "keys" to unlock it because it does not come to us "locked." The Bible was written by farmers,

fishermen, tax collectors, kings, priests, etc., to be understood by the common man on the street who would take their words in their simplest and most natural meaning.

Christ and the apostles did not speak in some strange esoteric language, but in the common language of their day. They used those figures of speech and idiomatic expressions which would make what they were saying absolutely clear to the general public. They did not act or teach "in a corner," but openly in the world (Acts 26:26). They went out of their way to emphasize that they were not telling legends and myths (II Pet. 1:16).

Progressive Revelation

Heb. 1:1 reminds us that special revelation has come to us in a gradual process over a long period of time. The Bible did not drop out of heaven in its completed form. The sixty-six books of the Bible took over two thousand years to complete. Over forty different authors were involved, most of whom never knew any of the other authors. The Bible is not one book, but a library of sixty-six books.

God spoke to our fathers in bits and pieces in various ways. Each new revelation was like a new piece of some gigantic cosmic puzzle. The total picture could not be seen until all the pieces were finally given in the New Testament.

The principle of progressive revelation explains why we do not find any doctrine developed in its fullness in Genesis. While the "seeds" of those doctrines may be found in Genesis, their full development awaited the coming of other prophets and apostles who would understand more by virtue of new revelations than those who went before them. Each new revelation was like a turn of the knob on a pair of binoculars which would eventually change the initial blurred vision of the seer to the point of crystal clarity.

The principle of progressive revelation is crucial to the biblical concept of God. This principle explains why the early anthropomorphic descriptions of God in Genesis gradually disappear as more information was revealed about the nature of God. New information was released by God as man developed the capacity to understand and receive it.

Progressive Revelation and the Trinity

Given the principle of progressive revelation as an *a priori* truth, what will we expect to find in the Bible when we examine it to see if the doctrine of the Trinity is true? While we will expect to find in the Old Testament a gradual unfolding of those basic concepts which make up the Trinity doctrine such as the multi-personal nature of God, the fully

developed form of the doctrine will await the appearance of the Second Person of the Trinity on earth and the writing of the New Testament. This expectation is deduced from our *a priori* assumption of progressive revelation.

On the other hand, most anti-Trinitarians assume as their *a priori* assumption that, if a doctrine is biblical, then it will be clearly and fully taught throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

They begin with the assumption that, if they do not find the doctrine of the Trinity as clearly and fully taught in the Old Testament as in the New Testament, this means that it is not a biblical doctrine. In so doing, they flatten the distinctions between the Testaments and operate on the assumption that the Bible is one book with no inner progress or development of thought. But the Bible is not one book written at one time by one human author. Its progressive nature cannot be ignored or denied without fatal results.

Conclusion

Modern theology's rejection of the Trinity is based more upon its *a priori* commitment to human autonomy than on any real exegetical grounds. Modern liberal theologians are limited to what they feel or think God ought to be according to their own felt needs which arise from their cultural context and their perceived psychological well-being. The poverty and sterility of modern liberal theology is the direct result of its inability to break free from worshipping its own reflection.

Those who have turned from idols to serve the living and the true God know that they are not limited by their own ideas and feelings because God has revealed Himself in the Written Word and in the Living Word. The self-disclosure of God in the Bible and in Christ is what sets us free not only from sin, but also from ignorance.

Notes

1. Philip Wesley Comfort, *The Quest for the Original Text* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992).
2. For a modern philosophical and exegetical defense of the omni-attributes of God and a refutation of Process theology, see Robert A. Morey, *Battle of the Gods* (Southbridge: Crowne, 1989), obtainable from Research and Education Foundation, P. O. Box 250, Newport, PA, 17074.
3. For a recent survey of modern liberalism, see David F. Wells, *The Person of Christ* (Alliance, OH: Bible Scholar Books, 1984).
4. *Newsweek*, 4 April 1994, 53.
5. John Elson points this out in his review of Armstrong's book: "How Man Created God" (*Time Magazine*, 21 Sept. 1993), 77.
6. I develop this subject more fully in *Death and the Afterlife* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1982)

Chapter Three

Orthodoxy and Heresy

Since relativism, like a cancer, has eaten its way through most of modern society, the only “orthodoxy” today is that there is no orthodoxy and the only “heresy” is the belief that there is such a thing as heresy. To use such words as “heresy” is viewed today as a social blunder as well as an intellectual oddity.

In the name of multi-culturalism, everything and anything is tolerated *except* biblical Christianity. The only ones for whom modern humanism has no tolerance are orthodox Christians. As Gordon Clark pointed out:

This twentieth century usually considers a heretic as a hero, a man to be admired, and imitated by all who have the courage to do so. A heresy-hunter, on the other hand, is the most depraved of all scoundrels, much worse than the Mafia, the drug addicts, and the prostitutes.¹

One example of this is the Episcopal Bishop John Spong. While willing to tolerate the most outrageous beliefs and conduct from witchcraft to sodomy, he has no toleration whatsoever for orthodox Christianity. In his book, *Born of a Woman: A Bishop Rethinks the Birth of Jesus*, Spong states:

A literalized myth is a doomed myth. Its truth cannot be rescued. Literalism is not even a benign alternative for contemporary Christians. It is, in the modern world, nothing less than an enemy to faith in Jesus Christ Literalism is a claim that God’s eternal truth has been or can be, captured in the time-limited concepts of human history The day has passed for me when, in the name of tolerance to the religious insecurities of others, I will allow my Christ to be defined inside a killing literalism.²

Even though most liberals are not as open about their intolerance as Spong, most of them ridicule Christian fundamentalists at every opportunity. To accept the Bible at face value is labeled “naive” and

"ignorant." To believe that Jesus was God manifested in the flesh is deemed something that only "idiots" would believe.

The Psychology of Heresy

In an age of religious pluralism, it is assumed that the word "heresy" is an "emotive" word which expresses someone's negative feelings towards those who disagree with him. Its psychological origins are identified as fear, insecurity, ignorance, conceit, hatred, prejudice, and racism. Anyone who dares to call any doctrine "heresy" and those who teach it "heretics," will feel the wrath of those who feel that it is "unkind," "unloving," and downright "mean" to use such terminology.

The contrast between orthodoxy and liberalism could not be greater than what it is today. Liberal theologians since the days of Ferdinand Bauer (1792-1860) have assumed, as part of their dogmatic structure, a reinterpretation of Church history in which Hegel's dialectic and Darwin's evolutionism is applied to the history of Christianity.³ Thus it is assumed for *a priori* reasons that there was no original faith, just as there may have been no original Jesus. They have rewritten Church history to conform to what it "ought to be," instead of what it really was.

The Sharp Contrasts

The following chart illustrates the sharp contrast between orthodox Christianity and religious liberalism.

Christianity	Liberalism
God is the measure of all things, including orthodoxy and heresy.	Man is the measure of all things including orthodoxy and heresy.
Orthodoxy and heresy are, thus, absolute and objective terms.	Orthodoxy and heresy are, thus, relative and arbitrary terms.
The Bible limits and defines what is orthodoxy and heresy.	Man limits and defines what is orthodoxy and heresy.
There was, from the beginning, a revealed body of beliefs which constituted the orthodox faith.	There was no original "faith" at the beginning. Everything slowly evolved through the centuries.
Heresy arose as a reaction to orthodoxy. Thus, orthodoxy was chronologically first.	Orthodoxy arose as a reaction to heresy. Thus, heresy was chronologically first.

Christianity	Liberalism
Orthodoxy and heresy remain the same, regardless of the cultural or ecclesiastical context.	One man's heresy is another man's orthodoxy. It is all relative to the cultural or ecclesiastical context.

The chart above reveals that modern humanism in the form of religious liberalism has taken the exact opposite position of Christian orthodoxy. That *they* are rejecting orthodoxy is self-evident. Thus, they will have to admit that their particular heresies are a reaction to a previously existing orthodoxy.

One example of the modern relativistic approach to orthodoxy and heresy can be found in David Christie-Murray's book *A History of Heresy*. He begins by stating:

Heresy, a cynic might say, is an opinion held by a minority of men which the majority declares unacceptable and is powerful enough to punish.⁴

It is, thus, no surprise to find that, according to Christie-Murray, orthodoxy and heresy are issues decided by the principle of "might makes right." In effect, what is orthodoxy in one age can become heresy, in the next. Everything is relative, including heresy.

Since most liberal theologians today do not believe that Christ was God, if we apply Christie-Murray's definition of heresy to this issue, then a denial of the deity of Christ becomes the new orthodoxy and the deity of Christ now becomes a heresy! Christie-Murray ends his book by saying:

Perhaps the orthodoxy that the centuries are shattering may be replaced by another, more embracing and closer to ultimate truth; perhaps the greatest heresy is the existence of any dogma at all. Mankind may be only at the beginning of the road to understanding, let alone certainty . . . The true Nicea of the Christian Church may be future millennia away.⁵

This explains why Christie-Murray could argue that Unitarians are Christians although they deny the Trinity:

. . . are Unitarians who reject the doctrine of the Trinity but who sometimes magnificently follow the Christian ethic and ideal not Christians?⁶

Belief in the Trinity is no longer a test of Christian orthodoxy, according to Christie-Murray. As long as you are sincere and “follow the Christian ethic,” you can believe whatever you want. Of course, this does not apply to orthodox Christians who disagree with him.

The Early Church

Did the early Christians share Christie-Murray's relativistic understanding of heresy? Did they have a “faith” which was clearly defined? Was this faith so commonly agreed upon that any doctrine which contradicted it was rejected? Or, was the faith of the first Christians so fluid and open that any and all ideas were allowed to compete freely within the Christian community?

A Fundamental Distinction

In order to answer these questions we must begin with a fundamental distinction between the “orthodoxy of Scripture” and the “orthodoxy of community.” The failure to grasp this basic distinction has resulted in much confusion. The following diagram illustrates the differences between these two meanings of the word “orthodoxy”:

<u>Orthodoxy of Scripture</u>	<u>Orthodoxy of Community</u>
absolute	relative
objective	subjective
eternal	temporal
transcendent	cultural
immutable	mutable
unity	diversity

By “orthodoxy of community” we simply mean that a church may require *more* of its members than what the Scriptures require. To be “orthodox” in this sense has more to do with conformity to the traditions and beliefs of a certain church or faith community than to the Bible. It is, thus, primarily *ecclesiastical* in nature.

This basic distinction explains how Baptist and Presbyterian churches can view each other as “orthodox” and yet disagree with each other over such things as infant baptism and church polity. Their unity flows from their mutual commitment to the orthodoxy of Scripture, while their diversity arises from the orthodoxy of their respective communities.

On certain issues there is a tacit agreement that everyone is free to make up his own mind. Two different faith communities can view each other as being part of the same orthodoxy of Scripture while recognizing that they do not hold to the same orthodoxy of community. This is why and how we have diversity between different orthodox denominations.

In contrast, the "orthodoxy of Scripture" has to do primarily with conformity to the clear teachings of the Bible. It is thus primarily *intellectual* in nature.

When we later label such theological systems, i.e., Arianism, as "heresy," we do not want to be misunderstood. Arianism is not a heresy in a *relative* sense because it does not fit in with the traditions and beliefs of our particular faith community. What we mean is that Arianism is heresy in an *absolute* sense because it contradicts the orthodoxy of Scripture.

While the orthodoxy of Scripture is fixed, the orthodoxy of community is fluid. A church may change its doctrinal position, but the Word of God does not change.

Our main concern throughout this entire work on the Trinity is not the traditions and beliefs of various faith communities, East and West. We believe that there is such a thing as the "orthodoxy of Scripture" because the evidence supports that position. The liberal assumption that the only orthodoxy is the relative "orthodoxy of community" needs to be overturned before we can proceed any further.

The Orthodox View

We must return once again to our basic epistemological question: *What must be in order for what is to be what it is?* If there is such a thing as the "orthodoxy of Scripture," then what kind of things would we expect find in the New Testament?

1. We would expect to find references in the New Testament to an already established body of doctrines which constituted "the faith" of Christians.
2. We would expect to find this "faith" expressed in creedal and hymnal form as well as in didactic form.
3. There would be only "one faith" as opposed to multiple faiths.
4. We would expect to find that the New Testament itself was written in the context of this "one faith" and is thus not its creator. This has great implications for Werde's idea that Paul created Christianity. If "the faith" was already established *before* the Pauline epistles were written, how and in what way could Paul be its creator?

5. We would also expect to find that when someone taught a doctrine which contradicted "the faith," he and his doctrine would be rejected as spurious, false, and heretical.
6. We would expect to find that there was only one understanding or interpretation of the person and work of Jesus Christ allowed. Thus only "one Jesus," "one Lord" and only "one gospel" would be viewed as the "true" doctrine and any "other" Jesus, Lord or gospel would be condemned.

The Modern Liberal View

On the other hand, if the modern liberal view is a faithful description of the early Church, what would we expect to find? As Harold Brown pointed out in his book *Heresies*:

If we postulate that the New Testament is relatively late in origin and in general use among Christians, and even that it sometimes contradicts itself, then we will not expect to find in it the "faith once delivered."⁷

1. We would, therefore, expect to find no references in the New Testament to an already established body of doctrines which constituted "the faith." After all, if no "one true faith" existed at that time, then there could be no references made to it.
2. We would expect to find a toleration for many different Jesuses, Lords, and gospels.
3. Since there was no "orthodox" view, there could not be any heresies.
4. We would expect to find no distinctions made between what is acceptable or unacceptable doctrine. The early Christians would be "open" to new views.
5. We would expect to find that no one was ever condemned on the basis of teaching false doctrine.

What the Evidence Reveals

When we turn to the New Testament, what do we find? Do we find what we would expect to find, if the traditional view of orthodoxy is true? As a matter of fact, we do! We find that "orthodoxy" and "heresy" were already operating as categories of thought in the apostolic Christian

community long before the New Testament itself was written. The exegetical and historical evidence is all solidly against the liberal view.

The New Testament is quite clear that there was a clearly defined body of doctrines which constituted "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). By a "common confession" (I Tim. 3:16) all Christians worshipped "one Lord," shared "one faith" and participated in "one baptism" (Eph. 4:5).

Throughout the New Testament we find so many references to "the faith" that one would have to be blind to miss the point—the early Church had a well defined body of beliefs which constituted the Christian "faith." The following texts demonstrate this clearly:

Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; 16:5	Col. 1:23
I Cor. 16:13	I Tim. 1:2; 3:9; 4:1; 5:8; 6:10, 21
II Cor. 13:5	II Tim. 3:8; 4:7
Gal. 1:23; 6:10	Tit. 1:13
Eph. 4:5, 13	Jude 3
Phil. 1:25, 27	Rev. 2:13

The "faith" of the early Church was not something it invented as it grew. Jesus identifies it as being "[His] faith" as opposed to having its origin in any other source (Rev. 2:13). This "faith" was once and for all of time given by special revelation to the saints of the first century (Jude 3). To contradict it was to depart from the faith, which is apostasy (I Tim. 4:1; 5:8; 6:10, 21; II Tim. 3:8).

How early did the Christian community understand that there was to be a set body of beliefs which constituted the one true faith? When the Church was born at Pentecost, the first converts "continually devot[ed] themselves to the apostles' teachings" (Acts 2: 42). Thus, from its very inception, the Church was exclusive—not inclusive. It was closed—not open. There was a set body of doctrines called "the apostles' teachings."

Religious Pluralism

Was religious pluralism tolerated in the new Church? No. Those who contradicted the one true faith (Tit. 1:9) were described as :

false prophets (Matt. 7:15)	ministers of Satan (II Cor. 11: 14-15)
false teachers (II Pet. 2:1)	dogs and evil workers (Phil. 3:2)
savage wolves (Acts 20:29)	false circumcision (Phil. 3:2)
deceitful workers (II Cor. 11:13)	blasphemers (I Tim. 1:20)

false apostles (II Cor. 11:13)	evil men and impostors (II Tim. 3:13)
heretics (Tit. 3:10)	followers of deceitful spirits (I Tim. 4:1)
liars (I John 2:22)	antichrists (I John 2:22)

These "heretics" were teaching doctrines which were in *contradiction* to an already established body of doctrines and which split the church (Gal. 1:6-9). You cannot contradict something that is not already established. The standard or rule by which a doctrine was accepted or rejected was "the apostles' teachings." This is what we mean by the "orthodoxy of Scripture." Whatever contradicts this rule is what we mean by "heresy."

False Prophets and Their Doctrines

The doctrines which "false apostles" taught were described by the authors of Scripture not only as "the elementary principles of the world" (Col. 2:8) and "opposing arguments of what is falsely called knowledge" (I Tim. 6:20), but also as follows:

perverse things (Acts 20:30)	philosophy (Col. 2:8)
another Jesus (II Cor. 11:4)	empty deception (Col. 2:8)
a different Gospel (II Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:6)	the traditions of men (Col. 2:8)
a distorted gospel (Gal. 1:7)	myths (I Tim. 1:4)
a different spirit (II Cor. 11:4)	endless genealogies (I Tim. 1:4)
speculations (I Tim. 1:4)	blasphemy (I Tim. 1:20)
doctrines of demons (I Tim. 4:1)	a different doctrine (I Tim. 6:3)
damnable heresies (II Pet. 2:1)	

New Testament Christology

To what degree was the faith of the early Church defined? For example, did the early Christians have a clear and definite view of the person and work of Jesus Christ? In other words, had they worked out a basic Christology?

Modern liberals assume as their *a priori* that the early Church did not decide which model of Jesus to adopt until much later. Thus, the early Church did not have "a" Christology, but enjoyed a wide range of different "models" of Jesus.

On the other hand, orthodox Christians assume that the early Church had a basic understanding of who Jesus Christ was and what He had accomplished by His life, death and resurrection. The central facts of his virgin birth, sinless life, atoning death, and bodily resurrection and ascension were non-negotiable.

While there was room for development and refinement within the scope of these doctrines, no denial of these things was allowed. Thus there were no competing "models" of Jesus in the early Church because they remained steadfast in the apostles' teaching on such things. Any other interpretation of the person and work of Christ was strongly opposed and openly condemned.

Whose *A Priori* Is Right?

Once again we are back to a battle of *a priori* assumptions. The only way to decide who is right is to review the evidence. What does it show? A survey of the New Testament reveals that the early Christians had already worked out a very detailed Christology before the New Testament was written. This is why we find the authors of the New Testament quoting previously existing Christological hymns and creeds (i.e., Phil. 2:5-11; I Tim. 3:16).

Since much of this Christology was already worked out to a great degree before the New Testament was written, this is why the authors could state that there was only one true doctrine of Christ (II John 9) and Christians must reject any "another Jesus" or "different gospel" (II Cor. 11:4). The orthodox doctrine of Christ included the following:

1. the pre-existence of Christ (John 1:1,2; I John 4:1-2)
2. the deity of Christ (John 1:1, 18; 20:28)
3. the incarnation of Christ (I John 4:2)
4. the humanity of Christ (Acts 2:22)
5. the vicarious atonement (I Cor. 15:3-4)
6. the bodily resurrection of Christ (Rom. 10:9)
7. the Lordship of Christ (I Cor. 12:3)
8. Jesus is the Christ (I John 2:22)

This "doctrine of Christ" was so firmly held that if someone showed up at a house church holding to some other doctrine, he was denied entrance to the meeting (II John 9-10). The early Christians were, thus, "closed" to any other interpretation of the person and work of Christ than that which came from the words of Jesus Himself (I Tim. 6:3-5) or from the Apostles (Acts 2:42).

They condemned outright any view of Jesus which either fell short of or was in contradiction of "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). They particularly rejected the idea that they derived their understanding of the person and work of Christ from myths or legends (II Pet. 1:16).

The emphasis in the New Testament is that the Church's understanding of the person and work of Christ came from first hand eyewitnesses who actually saw and heard Jesus Christ (Matt. 13:16; Luke 1:2; John 19:35; 21:24; II Pet. 1:16; I John 1:1-2). They *knew* who Jesus was and what He did on the cross from the Apostles who had lived with Jesus.

The Meaning of the Terms

Having seen that the concepts of orthodoxy and heresy were already established before the New Testament was written, what about the terms themselves? While the term "orthodoxy" was a later development, the words "heresy" and "heretic" are found in the New Testament.

The word *orthodoxy* comes from two Greek words meaning "right" and "honor." We *honor* God when we accept Him as He has revealed Himself in Scripture. To accept the biblical God is the *right* thing to do. But if we turn away from the Bible to our own speculations (Rom. 1:21), we dishonor God and do that which is wrong.

The Greek words αἵρεσις (heresy) and αἱρετικὸν (heretic) have a long history of discussion. The root meaning of these word refers to the *intellectual choice* one makes when choosing to believe something. It soon went from the choice to what was chosen to the chosen who accepted it. Thus, it referred, in the extra-biblical literature, to a group of individuals who associated with each other because they had freely chosen to accept the same opinions on certain issues.

It is in this sense that the word αἵρεσις first appears in the historical section of the New Testament. To those *outside* of the Church, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Christians were all various Jewish "sects" (αἵρεσις) in the sense of a group of people joined together by a common belief (Acts 5:17; 15:5; 24:14; 26:6; 28:22). To the outsider, each "sect" was just another way to God.

But for those *inside* the Church, they did not view themselves as just one more "sect" within Judaism. No, the Church was not a "sect" as some called it, but "the Way" to eternal life (Acts 24:14). Thus, the early Church did not view itself as just one more form of religious pluralism or inclusivism. It was seen as exclusive from its very birth.

The word is found in I Corinthians 11:19 and Galatians 5:20 where αἵρεσις (heresy), “came to be used to mean a separation or split resulting from a false faith.”⁸

Paul had warned the elders at Ephesus that:

I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, *speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.* (Acts 20:29-30)

From this text and others, such as Tit. 3:10, it is clear that heresy was so perverse because it threatened the unity of the church. Heretics not only taught false doctrine, but they drew people away from the Church.

Liberal theologians assume that a basic dichotomy exists between schism and theological error. According to them heresy only occurs where and when schism takes place and has nothing to do with theological error *per se*. Thus, as long as the theologian remains a member of his church, he cannot be deemed a heretic no matter how erroneous his theology becomes. As long as he does not leave the church, he can teach whatever he wants. This is why Pike and Spong could remain in the Episcopal Church even though they openly denied the Thirty Nine Articles.

While the distinction between schism and false teaching serves to keep liberal theologians in power, Oosterzee points out:

This whole distinction rests upon an arbitrary antithesis between truth and love, faith and life. In swerving from the purity of the Apostolic teaching, the heretics became also schismatics.⁹

This is also pointed out by Nevin who stated:

Heresy and schism are not indeed the same, but yet they constitute merely the different manifestations of one and the same disease. Heresy is theoretic schism; schism is practical heresy. They continually run into one another, and mutually complete each other. Each heresy is in principle schismatic; every schism is in its intermost constitution heretical.¹⁰

Gordon Clark pointed out in his comments on II Pet. 2:1:

What is heresy? Is it partisanship, schism, and nothing else? Is it immoral conduct? Or is it theological and intellectual in nature? The anti-intellectuals, of course, who favor either the first or second meaning, wish to deny that heresy is a matter of doctrine, for they hold that doctrine is unimportant in Christianity. Of course their conduct was iniquitous, and Peter condemns it severely, as we shall see. But basically the trouble is the intellectual content of their message. Furthermore, a short survey of the word heresy in the NT will show that it is essentially intellectual.¹¹

Thus, we must not artificially pit schism against error, as if the two were not organically connected. Heresy is the *root* while schism is the *fruit*. As one writer put it, "Division is the fruit of heresy."¹²

When we turn to the lexicographical material on the words αἵρεσις (heresy) and αἱρετικὸν (heretic), we find almost complete agreement among Greek authorities. Thayer defines the word αἵρεσις as "an opinion varying from the true exposition of the Christian faith (heresy): 2 Pet. ii.1."¹³ Balz and Schneider state:

For Paul, then, αἵρεσις are dissensions based on false teachings which threaten the Church's unity. . . . The αἱρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον of Titus 3:10 is, therefore, the *heretic* who has turned aside from "true doctrine."¹⁴

The two pivotal passages on this subject are Titus 3:10 and II Pet. 2:1. It might be helpful to examine these passages to establish the New Testament concept of heresy.

Titus 3:10

A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject.

In order to understand what Paul meant by the word αἱρετικὸν, the context of the book as a whole must be taken into account. The book of Titus is found in the Pastoral Epistles because it gives us a description of the qualifications for eldership. Those men who desire the office of elder must be:

holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance the teaching, that he may be able to both exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach. (Tit. 1:9-11)

An elder must be a courageous apologist when error arises, just as much as he is to be a faithful teacher to the saints (Tit. 2:1). Paul clearly has in mind the task of refuting any teaching which “contradicts” the gospel, especially the Judaizers who tried to mix works with grace and law with faith.

These false teachers were involved in “foolish controversies and genealogies” which produced endless “strife and disputes about the law” (Tit. 3:9a). The elders of the church must not be trapped into endless debates with those who do not want the truth. This would prove “unprofitable and worthless.” (Tit. 3:9b). Therefore, Paul recommends, that after a false teacher has been rebuked for his false doctrines on at least two occasions, he is to be labeled an αἰρετικὸν. From that point on, the congregation is to be warned that this αἰρετικὸν is “perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned” (Tit. 3:11).

Given the context, is there any doubt that the αἰρετικὸν is a false teacher (i.e., heretic) who has caused division in the church by his false doctrines? It is his *theological error* that has led to his being a factious person.

This was the understanding of the classic commentators, such as Thomas Taylor:

Who is a heretic? A heretic is he who, professing Christ, yet invents or maintains any error against the foundations of religion, and holds such error with obstinacy. A heretic must profess Christ. Jews, Turks, or pagans cannot properly be heretic, though they fight against Christ and all religion in its foundations. These are more properly called heathen, infidels, and atheists, without God in the world. But the person with whom Titus has here to deal, is done within the church, who is cast off from a foundation upon which he seemed to stand.¹⁵

The modern Lutheran scholar, R.C. Lenski pointed out:

Ἀἵρετικὸν is one who holds an αἵρεσις or a number of them, a chosen view of his own apart from the teaching of the Scripture. In Acts 24:14 Paul denies the charge that he holds to an *airesis*, and he does that because he believes all things written in the Law and the Prophets (i.e. the Old Testament) and has no opinion of his own on a single point. We thus have no difficulty in understanding the adjective. Paul says that a man is *hairetekos* who holds to such things as the myths, the genealogies, and the ignorant teaching of law mentioned in I Tim. 1:4-11, empty, ignorant, fantastic, vain though they were. Thus any teaching that forsakes Scripture and certainly such as contradicts Scripture stamps a man as *hairetikos*. He chooses for himself what the church, by choosing Scripture, must repudiate and disown. Whether this be little or much makes little difference since to the extent to which he chooses his own ideas to that extent the person concerned is *hairetikos*.¹⁶

Dr. Kenneth Wuest, one of the finest Greek scholars of the 20th century, commented on this passage:

"Heretick" is *hairetikos*, from the verb *haireo*, "to take, to take for one's self, to choose, prefer." The noun means, "fitted or able to take or choose, schismatic, factious." A heretic is one therefore who refuses to accept true doctrine as it is revealed in the Bible, and prefers to choose for himself what he is to believe.¹⁷

The great Princeton theologian B.B. Warfield, warned in his own day that the root of all heresy is the acceptance of man-made opinions in opposition to the clear teachings of Scripture:

It is plain that he who modifies the teachings of the Word of God in the smallest particular at the dictation of any "man-made opinion" has already deserted the Christian ground, and is already, in principle, a "heretic." The essence of "heresy" is that the modes of thought and tenets originating elsewhere than in the Scriptures of God are given decisive weight when they clash with the teachings of God's Word, and those are followed to the neglect or modification or rejection of these. In a time deeply marked by "concession," at all events, it is worth our while to remember on the one hand that "concession" is

the high road to “heresy,” and that “heresy” is “willfulness in doctrine”; and on the other, that God has revealed his truth to us to be held, confessed, and defended and give due force to the whole circle of revealed truth. We are “orthodox” when we account God’s declaration in his Word superior in point of authority to them, their interpreter, and their corrector. We are “heretical” when we make them superior in point of authority to God’s Word, its interpreter, and corrector. By this test we may each of us try our inmost thought and see where we stand—on God’s side or on the world’s.¹⁸

Peter’s Testimony

We now turn to the testimony of the Apostle Peter who warned the Church of the destructive teachings of false prophets:

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. (II Peter 2:1)

This is perhaps the clearest passage in the New Testament which establishes the intellectual nature of αἵρεσις. As pointed out by H.A. Whaley in the *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*:

[The] NT usage closest to the technical theological meaning[of heresy] is found in 2 Peter 2:1, where false teachers can be expected to “bring destructive heresies, even denying the Master . . .” This implies willful departure from accepted teaching.¹⁹

Dean Alford commented on this passage:

αἵρεσις here rather in the sense in which we now understand the word, new and self-chosen doctrines, alien from the truth; not sects (vulg.), which may be founded, but can hardly said to be introduced.²⁰

The Expositor’s Greek Testament states:

Clearly αἵρεσις here is used in the original sense of “tenet.”²¹

These “false prophets” are said to introduce “*destructive* heresies.” The word ἀπωλείας is more properly translated as “destructive” as opposed to the KJV’s “damnable.” The most famous Southern Baptist Greek scholar, A.T. Robertson comments:

Destructive heresies (hairesis apoleias). Descriptive genitive, “heresies of destruction” (marked by destruction) as in Luke 16:8 These “tenets” (Gal. 5:20) led to destruction.²²

The Apostle Peter states that those who teach heresy and those who believe it are both doomed to eternal conscious punishment.²³ The seriousness of theological error is based on the fact that what you believe will determine your eternal destiny.

Sufficient Demonstration

Just these two passages are sufficient to demonstrate that modern liberal theology cannot really lay claim to the word “Christian.” This was exactly what Dr. Gresham Machen’s pointed out in his book, *Christianity and Liberalism*. This was true in his day and is even more true today.

We Must Not Abuse This Truth

Does this mean that any disagreement over any doctrine in general throws us immediately into the realm of heresy? No. As John Calvin warned:

We have to exercise moderation in not immediately making a heretic of everyone who does not agree with our opinion, for there are some matters on which Christians may disagree among themselves without being divided into sects. Paul himself makes this point elsewhere when he bids them wait in unbroken harmony for the revelation of God (Phil. 3:15).²⁴

While it is true that Apostolic teaching as recorded in Scripture is what we mean by “orthodoxy” (and, thus, “heresy” is any doctrine which contradicts that teaching), we must also take into account that it is not always clear as to what the Apostles’ taught on an issue. This is not only true for us today, but it was also true for those who lived during the days of the Apostles.

This is why the church council described in Acts 15 took place. Two opposing sides went together to Jerusalem because both sides claimed to be following apostolic teaching. This would have never happened if everything were crystal clear.

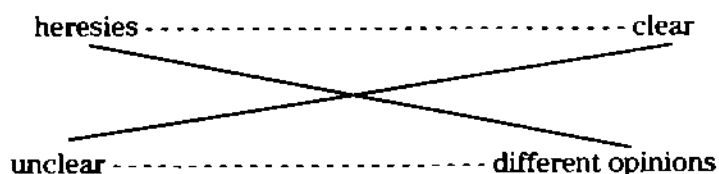
But, once the Apostles died, it was no longer possible to decide unclear issues by seeking an interview with them. And despite the claims of popes, the Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses, etc., no individual or group of individuals has the right to decide issues by divine fiat as if *they* were living Apostles. The only infallible guide today is the Written Word of God.

But we must hasten to point out that inspiration and infallibility do not automatically guarantee clarity (II Pet. 3:16). Thus, orthodox Christians frequently disagree on those issues which the New Testament does not clearly decide. The finer points of eschatology, church polity, baptism, etc., are issues which will never be resolved to everyone's satisfaction this side of heaven. This is why the Reformers made the distinction between essential and non-essential doctrine. As Jacobs pointed out in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*:

In the fixed ecclesiastical sense that it ultimately attained, [heresy] indicated not merely any doctrinal error, but "the open espousal of fundamental error" (Ellicott on Tit. 3:10), or, more fully, the persistent, obstinate maintenance of an error with respect to the central doctrines of Christianity in the face of all better instruction, combined with aggressive attack upon the common faith of the church and its defenders.²⁵

Non-Essential Doctrines

Non-essential doctrines are those issues over which good and godly Christians can disagree. The following diagram illustrates that just as there is a sliding scale of clarity when it comes to the Apostle's doctrine, there is also a corresponding sliding scale when it comes to theological disagreements. The word "heresy" should be reserved for contradictions of clear biblical truths. The further you go up the scale in clarity, the higher the probability of heresy.



We must be careful not to be too narrow or too broad in our definition of orthodoxy.²⁶ First, we must not confuse orthodoxy with salvation. While you cannot be saved without being orthodox, you can be orthodox without being saved. Nowhere in the Bible is someone said to be a Christian simply because he believes in orthodox doctrines. The demons believe in monotheism (James 2:19) and they have an orthodox understanding of Jesus (Luke 4:34). Does this mean they are Christians? No.

According to the New Testament, you must accept Christ as your personal Savior and Lord in order to be a Christian (John 1:12). Orthodoxy in doctrine does not necessarily translate into personal salvation. The famous Anglican Bishop, J. C. Ryle, comments:

The mere belief of the facts and doctrines of Christianity will never save our souls. Such belief is no better than the belief of devils. They all believe and know that Jesus is the Christ. They believe that He will one day judge the world, and cast them down to endless torment in hell. It is a solemn and sorrowful thought, that on these points some professing Christians have even less faith than the devil. There are some who doubt the reality of hell and the eternity of punishment. Such doubts as these find no place except in the hearts of self-willed men and women. There is no infidelity among devils. "They believe and tremble." (James 2:19)²⁷

Second, we must not reduce orthodoxy to the absolute *minimum* of truth which must be believed in order to be saved. The orthodoxy of Scripture encompasses far more doctrines than what is stated in the simple gospel message found in I Corinthians 15:3-4. Much harm has been done by the naive attempt to reduce orthodoxy to the bare bones of the gospel. B.B. Warfield explains:

It probably requires to be confessed that the form which has been taken by much recent apologetics has played into the hands of this "concession" habit, and may therefore be held responsible for some of the "heresy" in the Church of the day. Apologetics is in its nature a conciliatory science, and it is often the best apologetics to find and stand on the *minimum*. This is often the best, we say, but not always; and it can never be good apologetics to lead men to suppose that the *minimum* is all, or all that is worth defending, or all that is capable of defense. Yet it is undeniable that some recent apologetics has left on the minds of men some such

impression. Perhaps we may even say that some recent apologists have been emphatic in proclaiming that this *minimum* is the entirety of defensible Christianity. At its best, however, this method of apologetics needs to be warily used; when it becomes a fixed habit of mind, it is very liable not only to be abused but to prove the prolific parent of many evils. For one thing, it is found, in practice, that he who is accustomed to defend only the *minimum* is singularly apt to come to undervalue the undefended *maximum*. A truth not worth defending very soon comes to seem to him not worth professing. For another thing, the *maximum* left undefended is very apt to be also forgotten, and the defended *minimum* pierced out into some sort of apparent completeness, with scraps borrowed from the tenets elsewhere originating than in the Word of God; so a "perversion of Christianity" arises, "an amalgamation with it of ideas discordant with its nature." For still another thing, he who only defends the *minimum* renounces the strongest and best of all the evidences of Christianity which springs at once from an apprehension of it as a whole, as a perfect and perfectly consistent system of truth; the evidence of the gospel itself as the grandest scheme of thought ever propounded to the world, is entirely lost. So that it may not unnaturally happen sometime that the defense of the *minimum* alone will turn out to be the *minimum* defense of the gospel.²⁸

Not Just the Minimum

Too many Evangelicals today blindly accept anyone as a "Christian" if he says, "I believe in God." It is assumed that merely saying this kind of thing is the *minimum* needed for salvation or orthodoxy.

It really does not matter to them if the "god" he believes in is not the God of the Bible. His god could be an ever evolving finite "happening" who is devoid of the omni-attributes of God. It could be the poor pathetic struggling deity of Process Theology who is not omniscient, omnipotent, immutable, perfect, etc. But, all that does not matter. As long as the fellow says, "I believe in God," he has fulfilled the *minimum*. It would be unloving and unkind to ask in what kind of god the man believes.

It is thus no surprise to find that many today no longer regard such doctrines as the omni-attributes of God, the foreknowledge of God, the dual nature and deity of Christ, His bodily resurrection, eternal conscious punishment, the inerrancy of Scripture, original sin, the vicarious

atonement, the virgin birth, the lost condition of the heathen, the Second Coming, etc., as essential to orthodoxy.

It is assumed that if a doctrine is not essential for salvation, then it is not part of the gospel. And, if it is not a part of the gospel, then it is not necessary for orthodoxy. They have in effect confused the requirements for salvation with the ingredients of orthodoxy and misunderstood both of them.

Conclusion

How does this apply to the doctrine of the Trinity? It is assumed by cultists and liberals alike that while the doctrine of the Trinity is clearly a part of the orthodoxy of the Christian community, it is not a part of the orthodoxy of Scripture. They claim that the doctrine of the Trinity was "invented" by the early Church. These early Christians derived this doctrine from Greek philosophy and not from the Scriptures. Thus we can safely jettison it as unnecessary baggage.

Evangelical theologians assume the exact opposite. Because the doctrine of the Trinity is a part of the orthodoxy of Scripture, it became a part of the orthodoxy of the Christian community. The doctrine of the Trinity was derived from Scripture and is an essential truth. The only way to discover who is right is to examine the Bible to see which position is borne out by the evidence.

Notes

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6. Ibid., 12.
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8. Ibid., 2.
9. J. J. Oosterzee on Titus 3:10 in *Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), 2:22.
10. Quoted by Richard Chevenix Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 391.
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19. See H.A. Whaley in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 3:122.
20. Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1968), 4:402.
21. *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 5:133.
22. A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman, 1933), 6:160.
23. See our discussion of such words as ἀπόλλυμι in *Death and Afterlife* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1984). 108f.
24. John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 387-388.
25. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939), 3:1377.
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28. Warfield, 2:677-678.

Chapter Four

Expectations

Everyone approaches the Bible with certain *a priori* assumptions or presuppositions which produce certain expectations of what they will find when they actually pick up a Bible and read it. If you were raised a Christian, then you expect to find the Trinity in the Bible just as much as those who were raised as Jehovah's Witnesses do not expect to find it.

There are no exceptions to this fact. No one is "neutral" or "objective" in the sense of not having presuppositions. Even the idea of neutrality is itself an *a priori* assumption. Both modern philosophy and modern science have come to recognize that everyone begins with *a priori* assumptions.

This truth cannot be denied without proving it. One Jehovah's Witness objected to my observation that we all begin with *a priori* assumptions, until I pointed out that, evidently, he had the *a priori* assumption that he did not have any *a priori* assumptions! To deny it is to prove it.

If we begin with the doctrine of the Trinity as the theological given, what kinds of things should we expect to find in the Bible? In other words, if A is true, then we will expect to find B, C, D, E, F, etc., true as well. And, if we do find them to be true, then this will verify A.

The issue becomes quite simple. Is the doctrine of the Trinity verified by Scripture? The only way to find out is to open the Bible and to examine specific texts to see what the authors of the Bible believed and taught.

In this chapter we will briefly outline some of the things which Trinitarians expect to find in the Bible.

1. We expect to find in the Bible that there is only one, true, living, eternal Being who is God by nature and Maker of heaven and earth.
2. We expect to find in the Bible that the one true God is incomprehensible.
3. We expect to find in the Bible that the one true God exists in three Persons called the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
4. We expect to find that when the triune God of the Bible is viewed in terms of Being, all three persons are co-equal in all things.

5. We expect to find in the Bible that when the triune God is viewed in terms of function, each member of the Trinity has His own specific task, office, and authority.
6. We expect to find in the Bible that the man called Jesus actually pre-existed His birth from all eternity and was never created or brought into existence.
7. We expect to find in the Bible that divine attributes and works are attributed to Jesus.
8. We expect to find in the Bible that Jesus was called "God" and was worshiped as such by the first Christians.
9. We expect to find in the Bible that divine names, attributes, and works are applied to the Holy Spirit.
10. In short, we expect to find in the Bible all the essential elements which form the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity.

But what if we do not find what we expect to find? Or worse, what if we find the direct opposite of what we expect to find? Since the denial of the consequence is always valid in logic, the doctrine of the Trinity could not survive under those circumstances.

For example, the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God is a necessary corollary truth to the doctrine of the Trinity. While the former can be true without the Trinity being true, the Trinity cannot be true without the former being true. This is why anti-Trinitarians always attack this doctrine. If they can refute it, it would pull the rug right out from under the doctrine of the Trinity.

What if we found the Bible saying that God was perfectly comprehensible and could be understood and explained by human reason? This would at once overthrow the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God without which the doctrine of the Trinity cannot survive.

But refutation is not just denial. Anti-Trinitarians must demonstrate in a positive sense that the Bible teaches the complete comprehensibility of God. They cannot simply deny the incomprehensibility of God and naively assume they have proven their own belief.

As we shall see, the failure to document their own beliefs is the main flaw in anti-Trinitarianism. They spend most of their time denying and ridiculing the Trinity and very little time demonstrating their own beliefs. Most of them function on the fallacy that, if they can "refute" the Trinity, they have automatically established their own beliefs. But, just because you have refuted someone else's ideas does not mean that your ideas are right. You, too, could be wrong! This is one of the fundamental laws of logic.

Conclusion

With this brief introduction, it is time to search the Scriptures to see whether the doctrine of the Trinity can be found within its pages.

Chapter Five

Only One God

The first principle of the doctrine of the Trinity is that *there is only one, true, eternal, living Being who is God by nature and Maker of heaven and earth*. The doctrine of the Trinity is thus a rigorous form of monotheism and is absolutely hostile to polytheism in any form.

Trinitarians do not believe that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three separate gods. Such an idea is tritheism which is a form of polytheism. Neither do Trinitarians believe that angels or men have been or will ever be God by nature.

If these Trinitarian beliefs are true then what would we expect to find in the Bible?

1. We would expect to find in the Bible where God Himself says that He alone is God and that the gods of other religions are false gods.
2. We would expect to find in the Bible where prophets, priests, kings, and apostles state that there is only one God and the gods of other religions are false gods.

When we turn to the Bible, what do we find?

Only One God

God dogmatically stated on many occasions that He alone is God and that there were no other gods *before* Him; there are no gods *besides* Him now; and there will be *no new ones in the future*:

“See now that I, I am He, and *there is no god besides Me*. It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded, and it is I who heal; And *there is no one who can deliver from My hand*.” (Deut. 32:39)

“You are My witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and My servant whom I have chosen, in order that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He, *before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me*.” (Isa. 43:10)

Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of Hosts: "*I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.*" (Isa. 44:6)

"And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, or is there any other Rock? I know of none." (Isa. 44:8b)

"I am the LORD, and *there is no other; besides Me there is no God . . .* That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and *there is no other . . .*" (Isa. 45:5-6)

"I am the LORD and *there is none else.*" (Isa. 45:18b)

"Declare and set forth your case; Indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And *there is no other God besides Me*, a righteous God and a Savior; *There is none except Me.* Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and *there is no other.*" (Isa. 45:21-22)

"Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and *there is no other*; I am God, and *there is no one like Me.*" (Isa. 46:9)

It is crystal clear from the passages above that God Himself states in unequivocal terms that there are no other gods before Him, besides Him or yet to be in the future. This is exactly what Trinitarians expected to find in the Bible. Thus, it is no surprise to find that prophets, priests, kings, and apostles taught exactly the same thing.

"For this reason Thou art great, O Lord GOD; for *there is none like Thee, and there is no God besides Thee.*" (II Sam. 7:22)

"so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; *there is no one else.*" (I Kings 8:60)

"O LORD, there is none like Thee, neither is there any God besides Thee." (I Chron. 17:20)

"Thou art the God, *Thou alone*, of all the kingdoms of the earth." (Isa. 37:16)

"Sabeans . . . will make supplication to you: 'Surely, God is with you, and *there is none else, no other God.*'" (Isa. 45:14)

There is none like Thee, O LORD. (Jer. 10:6)

There is none like Thee. (Jer. 10:7)

Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that *there is no God but one*. For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us *there is but one God*. (I Cor. 8:4-6)

There is one God. (I Tim. 2:5)

The evidence is so overwhelming that even the demons understand that there is only one God (James 2:19). Yet, such cults as the Mormons teach that there are actually billions of gods and that they themselves will become gods and goddesses.¹

The Only True God

The God of the Bible is the one "true" God in opposition to the "false" gods of the heathen:

"And for many days, Israel was without *the true God* and without a teaching priest and without law." (II Chron. 15:3)

But the LORD is *the true God*. (Jer. 10:10)

"that they may know Thee, *the only true God*." (John 17:3)

For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and *true God*. (I Thess. 1:9)

This is *the true God* and eternal life. Little children, guard yourselves from idols. (I John 5:20, 21)

These texts demonstrate that such gods as Baal, Molech, Allah, Siva, Zeus, Ra, Thor, etc., are all false gods. They are not different names for the one true God of Israel. They are false gods because they are no gods at all. They are the creations of man.

The Only Eternal God

The God of the Bible is the one true God because He alone is eternal while all the gods created by man have a beginning and will have an end. They are creatures of time and space while the true God is timeless and spaceless, i.e. infinite in all things.²

The eternity of God is taught in the Old and New Testaments in such places as Gen. 21:33; Deut. 33:27; Isa. 40:28; Jer. 10:10; Rom. 16:26; I Tim. 1:11.

The Only Living God

The one true God is a living Being and not a lifeless idol of wood, stone or metal. He has "life in Himself" and is thus eternally self-existent (John 5:26). He is called the "living God" many times in the Bible in contrast to the lifeless gods of the heathen:

Deut. 5:26	Hos. 1:10
Josh. 3:10	Matt. 16:16; 26:63
I Sam. 17:26, 36	Acts 14:15
II Kings. 19:4, 16 II	II Cor. 3:3; 6:16
Ps. 42:2; 84:2 I	I Thess. 1:9
Isa. 37:4 I	I Tim. 3:15; 4:10
Jer. 10:10; 23:36	Heb. 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22
Dan. 6:26	Rev. 7:2

It does not really matter if we are talking about the ancient gods of the Middle East or the gods of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam or the cults and the occult. The authors of the Bible view the gods of the heathen as lifeless as well as false.

The Only God by Nature

The apostle Paul reminded the Galatians of their pagan background:

However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those [gods] which *by nature are no gods*. (Gal. 4:8)

Ἀλλὰ τότε μὲν οὐκ εἰδότες θεὸν ἐδουλεύσατε τοῖς φύσει μὴ οὖσιν θεοῖς·

Paul states that all the while they were pagans, μὲν οὐκ εἰδότες θεὸν (they did not know God)³ Lenski comments:

The condition of the Gentile Christians before their conversion . . . is described by the constative participle, "not knowing God." . . . It is a simple fact, the Gentiles did not even know the true God; they lived in utter pagan darkness and blindness.⁴

He goes on to say:

All of the paganism found in the world today presents the same picture of the vilest and the most pitiful slavery. The pagan gods are not gods in any true sense of the word.⁵

This is the same point which Paul made to the Romans and the Corinthians (Rom. 1:18-25 and I Cor. 1:18-24).

Secondly, Paul pointed out that the pagan gods they worshipped were "by nature no gods." The significance of these words is paramount.

When Paul wrote τοῖς φύσει μὴ οὖσιν θεοῖς, he meant that while there are many different competing concepts of God, the Biblical God is the only true God and all the other gods are *by their very nature* not God.

The word φύσει is the singular feminine of φύσις which means the essential nature of things in and of themselves. It refers to what things are in their nature as opposed to mere appearance.⁶

If the gods of the heathen are not God by nature, then what is their nature? The famous German commentator Heinrich Meyer comments:

For, in the apostle's view, the realities which were worshipped by the heathen as gods, were not gods, but demons. In his view, therefore, their nature was not divine but at the same time not of mere mundane matter; it is demonic, a point which must have been well known to the Galatians from his oral instruction.⁷

In I Corinthians 10:20-21, Paul warned the Corinthians not to participate in pagan sacrifices because:

. . . the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, *they sacrifice to demons, and not to God*; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

ἀλλ' ὅτι ἃ θύουσιν, δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῷ
[θύουσιν]· οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς κοινωνοὺς τῶν
δαιμονίων γίνεσθαι. οὐ δύνασθε ποτήριον κυρίου
πίνειν καὶ ποτήριον δαιμονίων, οὐ δύνασθε
τραπέζης κυρίου μετέχειν καὶ τραπέζης δαιμονίων.

When Paul warned them not to sit at the τραπέζης δαιμονίων (table of demons), sipping from the ποτήριον δαιμονίων (cup of demons), while they enjoyed the κοινωνοῦς τῶν δαιμονίων (fellowship of demons), he was paraphrasing Moses who warned Israel in his day:

They sacrificed to demons who were not God, to gods whom they have not known, new gods who came lately, whom your fathers did not dread. (Deut. 32:17)

יִזְבְּחוּ לַשְׂדִּים לֹא אֱלֹהִים לֹא יָדְעוּם חֲדָשִׁים מִקֶּדֶם
בָּאוּ לֹא שְׂעָרוֹם אֲבֹתֵיכֶם:

Moses did not hesitate to say that the heathen are יִזְבְּחוּ לַשְׂדִּים (worshipping demons) and לֹא אֱלֹהִים (not God). While the authors of the Bible viewed pagan idols as nothing but wood, stone and metal, at the same time, they clearly believed that the unseen powers which lay behind these gods were demonic and evil (I Chron. 16:26; Ps. 96:5; II Kings 19:18; Isa. 37:19; II Chron. 13:9; Isa. 40:8-20, 25, 26; 45:18; Jer. 2:11; 5:7; 10:8-10; 16:20; Hab. 2:18-20; Acts 19:26; I Cor. 8:4-5; 10:20; Gal. 4:8).

This means that all the gods of the heathen are demonic in origin and power. It really does not matter if it is Buddha, Allah, Siva, Krishna, the gods of the Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses or the New Agers. They are all demon gods and any worship given to them ascends to the demons and not to God.

Many people today naively assume that all gods of all religions are equally "true" because they are all actually false. "God" is whatever you want he, she, it or them to be. Thus, no one should claim to worship the one true God.

The authors of the Bible knew nothing of the sirenic ecumenicism of our day. They believed that there was the only one true God and that all the other religions and their gods were not only demonic, but *stupid and foolish*. While such language is not politically correct, it is thoroughly Biblical:

For among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like Thee. But *they are altogether stupid and foolish* in their *discipline of delusion*—their idol is wood! Beaten silver is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of a craftsman and of the hands of a goldsmith; violet and purple are their clothing; *they are all the work of skilled men*. But the LORD is the true God. . . . *Every man is stupid, devoid of knowledge*. Every goldsmith is put to

shame by his idols; for his molten images are deceitful, and there is no breath in them. (Jer. 10:7-10, 14)

Obviously, the authors of the Bible would not have won any ecumenical awards! The apostle Paul viewed all other religions as the idolatrous result of man's running from God:

For even when though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but *they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.* Professing themselves to be wise, *they became fools*, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. (Rom. 1:21-23)

This is tough-minded monotheism at its best. Anything less is not biblical monotheism.

Maker of Heaven and Earth

One constant theme given throughout the Bible is that the God of Israel is the only true God because He is the Creator of all things:

"Thou art the God, Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. *Thou hast made heaven and earth.*" (Isa. 37:16)

"I, the LORD, am *the maker of all things, stretching out the heavens by Myself, and spreading out the earth all alone*, causing the omens of boasters to fail, making fools out of diviners, causing wise men to draw back, and turning their knowledge into foolishness. (Isa. 44:24-25)

For thus says the LORD, *who created the heavens (He is God who formed the earth and made it)*, . . . I am the LORD, and there is none else." (Isa. 45:18)

The prophet Jeremiah beautifully put everything together when he said,

But the LORD is the *true* God; He is the *living* God and the *everlasting* King. . . . Thus you shall say to them, "*The gods that did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.*" *It is He who made the*

earth by His power . . . For the Maker of all is He, and Israel is the tribe of His inheritance; The LORD of hosts is His name.
(Jer. 10:10-12, 16)

The importance of God as Maker of heaven and earth cannot be under emphasized. This is why the theory of evolution is the main weapon in the atheist's arsenal. If evolution is true, then the God of the Bible is false. It is either one way or the other.

Process Philosophy

Another modern denial of creation is found in Process philosophy and theology. Process thought defines "God" as a chance-driven, bi-polar, evolutionary process with no self-existent or continuing Being.

They claim that everything, including God, is in the process of "becoming" what no one knows, not even God. They deny that God has or is a continuing "being." Instead, God is only a "happening" or a "becoming" in a moment of eternal time.

According to Process thought, God and the world are in an eternal bi-polar relationship in which each needs the other. Thus, the Bible is in error when it says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). They turn the text around and say, "In the end the heavens and the earth shall create God." Its denial of God as the Maker of heaven and earth is more than sufficient to reveal the pagan nature of process thought.

Alfred North Whitehead, the founder of Process philosophy, openly admitted that he was resurrecting the philosophies of Heraclitus and Plato. He merely dressed them up with modern terminology. He stated that he preferred Plato and the gods of ancient Greece to the Bible and its God. He went so far as to say that the Jehovah of the Bible was his idea of the devil!⁸

False Dichotomies

Philosophically speaking, Whitehead and his followers assume the basic Greek philosophic dichotomy between "process" and "being" as an *a priori* truth. This dichotomy first appeared when the philosophies of Heraclitus (all is process) and Parmenides (all is being) clashed during the pre-Socratic period of Greece.

It has never dawned on them that they may have assumed a false dichotomy to begin with. A "being" in action is what we call "process."

Thus, we do not have to choose between *either* being *or* process, as if the two concepts were mutually exclusive. We can have them both.

Also, in order for process to occur, there must be some *thing* that is in motion because motion is not a thing. Both motion and process are qualities or attributes of a *thing*, i.e., being and not things in and of themselves. See our book *Battle of the Gods* for more details on the fundamental errors in Process philosophy and theology.

Conclusion

What must be in order for what is to be what it is? When we opened the Bible we found that it does in fact teach the first principle of the doctrine of the Trinity: *There is only one, true, eternal, living Being who is God by nature and Maker of heaven and earth.* This concept is exactly what we expect to find in the Bible if the doctrine of the Trinity is true.

Notes

1. See my discussion of Mormonism and its polytheism in *Battle of the Gods* (Southbridge, MA: Crowne, 1989), 29-40. It is obtainable from Truth Seekers, P. O. Box 250, Newport, PA 17074.
2. The book *Battle of the Gods* is a detailed demonstration of the timelessness of God and His perfect foreknowledge of all things and a refutation of Process Theology.
3. For a description of Galatian religion, see William M. Ramsay, *A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965), 86f.
4. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, Ephesians and Phillipians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 208.
5. Ibid., 210.
6. The Greek lexicons are unanimous on this. See Thayer (p. 660) and Arndt and Gingrich (p. 877).
7. Henrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Epistle to the Galatians* (Winona Lake: Alpha, 1979), 178.
8. See *Battle of The Gods*, 95-100, for a full discussion of Process Philosophy and Theology.

Chapter Six

The Incomprehensible God

The Trinitarian begins with the *a priori* assumption that the triune God of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will be incomprehensible because God is essentially incomprehensible in His nature. The Trinity is so deep a mystery that it forces us to our knees in wonder, awe and praise. After all, any god we could fully understand and explain would be *less* than what we are. Such a god would not be worthy of our worship, awe or praise. The inescapable truth is that God will always be greater than our finite capacity to understand fully or to explain exhaustively.

Our failure to understand or explain fully the Trinity or any other aspect of God is not due to some defect in God or in His revelation. The “defect,” if it can be called that, is nothing more or less than the reality of our own finiteness. Man is a finite creature with limited abilities intellectually as well as physically. Indeed, we do not even have an exhaustive knowledge of ourselves much less God!

Since we can go only so far in explaining things and then we bump up against our own finiteness, Trinitarians expect to run out of words and ideas when they attempt to define the triune nature of the infinite Creator.

If the Trinity were fully understandable, this would be an indication that it is erroneous. But the Trinity is so deep and so high a concept that we expect to be left with unresolved problems and unanswered questions. Indeed, we are not ashamed that the Trinity is a mystery on a high order. We boast in it (I Cor. 1:31).

Not a Surprise

The incomprehensibility of God is, thus, not a surprise to the Trinitarian. If there is an infinite God who has revealed Himself to finite man, then it only follows that what is revealed will go beyond man’s finite capacity to understand. Faith swims when reason can no longer feel the bottom.

God Is Not Irrational

Trinitarians do not mean to imply that God is irrational or illogical when they speak of His incomprehensibility. They simply mean that God

is beyond man's capacity to understand or explain *exhaustively*. In this sense, God is *beyond* human reason without being contradictory of it.

We can have a true but finite knowledge of God on a personal and intellectual level because God has revealed Himself. Thus, while we cannot fully understand the God who has revealed Himself, yet we can and do know Him. See Jeremiah 9:23, 24; Daniel 11:32; John 17:3; Galatians 4:8-9; I John 4:4-8; 5:18-21.

The historic Christian doctrine of incomprehensibility is the opposite of rationalistic "reductionism," which reduces God to human categories in order to make Him "manageable," "coherent," and "explainable."

Incomprehensibility allows God to be GOD. It reveals that God is infinitely better and greater than man. Thus, we can build all the theological models we want, and we can try to force God into them, but in the end God will not "fit." He will always be beyond our grasp. He is too high for us to scale and too deep for us to fathom. The finite span of the human mind will never encompass the infinite triune God of Scripture.

The issue before us once again is that the Christian is starting from a different set of *a priori* assumptions than the cultist or the liberal theologian. The issue is not whether someone has *a priori* assumptions, but whose assumptions are borne out in Scripture?

What We Expect to Find

What must be in order for what is to be what it is? If the doctrine of the Trinity is true, then we would expect to find that the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God is also true. If the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God is true, then we would expect to find it in the Scriptures. And if it is a biblical doctrine, then the Trinitarians are justified in their use of it and those who deny it are refuted at the same time.

The Biblical Evidence

When we open the Bible, what do we find? What does the evidence reveal? Who is right? We will begin with the book of Job because it is the fullest treatment in the Bible concerning the incomprehensibility of God.

When Job wrestled with the problem of evil, this was not a mere academic exercise. The death of his children, the theft of his goods, the loss of his health, the ruin of his marriage, and the criticisms of his friends were all very real and very painful to him.

But Job said that he was willing to accept evil as well as good because they both came "from God" (Job 2:10). He was even willing to worship the God who "took" away his children and his wealth saying:

"The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." (Job 1:21)

יְהוָה נָתַן וַיְהוּה לָקַח יְהוָה שֵׁם יְהוָה מְבָרָךְ:

Job did not trace the evils that befell him to bad luck but to Yahweh. It is Yahweh who gave him all these things and it is Yahweh who has taken them away.

When his wife told him to curse God for all the evils He had sent their way, Job refused (Job 2:9). Later, in the face of unbelievable pain and suffering, Job exclaimed:

"Though He slay me, I will hope in Him." (Job 13:15)

הֵן יִקְטְלֵנִי (לֹא) [לֹו] אֵיחָל אֶדְרֹכֶנִי

This passage is very important for Job viewed God as his "Slayer." He did not say that "chance" or "bad luck" or even "the Devil" was the cause of all the evils which came upon him.

Job clearly assumed that God was in control of this world. Although the agents who caused the evil were the Devil, the Sabaeans, etc., Job bowed before God as the One who sent the evils his way. Yet, he did not "blame" or "curse" God, as if He were the author, i.e., the agent, of these evils.

How His Faith Triumphed

How could Job endure all these things and still believe in God? Why didn't he give up his belief in God and become an atheist? Why didn't he trade in his infinite God for a finite god like the gods of the heathen? They were limited in power and could not know the future. Did Job ever limit his God in these ways? How did he handle it?

Job handled all the evils in life the same way true believers have always handled them. Faith! Mighty faith! Faith that looks to God alone! This was his secret. He ultimately accepted the fact that he was incapable of fully comprehending the nature and ways of God. He simply trusted in God that He knew what He was doing. Job did not presume to instruct the Almighty.

Several passages in Job deserve close study. We have placed certain key words in italics:

"But as for me, I would seek God; and I would place my cause before God; who does great and *unsearchable* things, wonders *without number*." (Job 5:8-9)

אוֹלָם אֲנִי אֶדְרֹשׁ אֱלֹהִים וְאֶל־אֱלֹהִים אֲשִׁים דְּבַרְתִּי:
עֲשֵׂה גְדֻלּוֹת וְאִין חֶקֶר נִפְלְאוֹת עַד־אִין מִסְפָּר:

The word "unsearchable" is a translation of two Hebrew words: חֶקֶר (searching) and אִין (without). Since we are dealing with poetic parallelism, the word אִין (without) is used a second time with the word מִסְפָּר (numbering).

The word חֶקֶר (searching) means to investigate an issue until you understand it (Prov. 25:2). When combined with אִין (without), it means that no amount of research and meditation will produce full comprehension. God is beyond our ability to search out.

The second word, מִסְפָּר (numbering) when combined with אִין (without) means that it is impossible to number the mighty acts of God. We will run out of numbers before we run out of the wonders of God.

Eliphaz points out that when we try to search out the "whys" of God's actions, we will always find that His ways are "unsearchable" and "without number," i.e., incomprehensible:

"Who does great things, *unfathomable*, and wondrous works *without number*. Were He to pass by me, *I would not see Him*; were He to move past me, *I would not perceive Him*. Were He to snatch away, *who could restrain Him*? Who could say to Him, '*What art Thou doing?*'" (Job 9:10-12)

Job takes up the very words of Eliphaz and speaks of the incomprehensible nature of God and His works in verse ten. What God does is so "great" that no one can חֶקֶר (search) it. This makes His wondrous works אִין מִסְפָּר (without number).

Job now proceeds to the fact that we cannot "see" God. Thus, we cannot "perceive" His motives or goals. Neither can we "restrain" Him from doing whatever He wants. Thus, we have no right to challenge God by demanding, "What art Thou doing?"

"Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty?" (Job 11:7)

הַחֶקֶר אֱלֹהִים תִּמְצָא אִם עַד־תִּכְלִית שְׂדֵי תִמְצָא:

The impact of these rhetorical questions cannot be avoided. The Hebrew literally says: "By searching—can you really find out about God?" (הַחֲקֹר אֱלֹהִים תִּמְצָא) The obvious answer is, "No."

Zophar is not saying that no one can find God by searching *per se*. That is actually the only way to find God. But in the context he is saying that no one can *search out*, i.e., fully comprehend, God.

Zophar then continues by saying that no one עַד־תִּכְלִית שְׂרֵי תִמְצָא (can discover to the end, i.e., to perfection, the Almighty). Notice that in this text Zophar has in view the *nature* of God and not just His works. He speaks of עַד־תִּכְלִית, meaning "unto perfection" or "to the end." The text goes on to emphasize this truth:

They are high as the heavens, what can you do? *Deeper* than Sheol, what can you know? Its measure is *longer* than the earth, And *broad*er than the sea. (Job 11:8-9)

נִבְהִי שָׁמַיִם מִהִתְפַּעֵל עֲמֻקָּה מִשְׁאוּל מִהִתְרַע:
אֶרְכָּה מֵאֶרֶץ מִדָּה וּרְחֹבָה מִנִּיָּים:

If we could search out all of creation in terms of its נִבְהִי (height), עֲמֻקָּה (depth), אֶרְכָּה (length), and וּרְחֹבָה (breadth), we still could not "discover," i.e. comprehend, the infinite nature of the Almighty. This is also applied to the sovereign will of the Almighty. If He wants to "pass by or shut up" something (v.10), no one can restrain Him. He will do as He pleases:

"If He passes by or shuts up, or calls an assembly, who can restrain Him? For He knows false men, and He sees iniquity without investigating." (Job 11:10-11)

אִם־יִחַלֵּף וַיִּסְגֵּי וַיִּקְהִיל וּמִי יִשְׁבְּנוּ:
כִּי־הוּא יָרַע מִתִּישׁוּא וַיִּרְא־אֵן וְלֹא יִתְבּוֹנֵן:

God's omniscience is then defined in terms of an immediate and perfect knowledge of all things including the sins of man (v. 11). God's knowledge does not "grow" because He does not have to investigate a matter to learn about it. God knows all things וְלֹא יִתְבּוֹנֵן (without investigation), i.e., without waiting until the event and its investigation to occur (Isa. 46:10). The word יִתְבּוֹנֵן is in the imperfect tense which means to investigate or search out something. The incomprehensibility of God serves as the context for both God's sovereignty and God's omniscience.

Then Job answered the LORD and said:

"I know that Thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted. . . . Therefore *I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.* 'Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask Thee, and do Thou instruct me.' . . . Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:1-4, 6)

Under the rebuke of God for using personal opinion to solve the problem of evil, Job "repents" and "retracts" all the things he and his friends had said. He now bows before and submits to God. He admits that God can do whatever He wants and no one can frustrate or condemn His sovereign will. He admits that such questions are נִפְלְאוֹת (too wonderful), i.e., too mysterious, for him. He will leave such things to God.

Other Passages

The rest of Scripture also speaks of the incomprehensibility of God. Let us examine a few of these passages:

Such knowledge is *too wonderful* for me; It is *too high*, I cannot attain to it. (Ps. 139:6)

פְּלִיאָה רַעַת מִמֶּנִּי נִשְׁגָּבָה לֹא-אוּכָל לָהּ:

In this Psalm, David begins with the subject of God's omniscience in verses 1-5, and then responds to it by bringing up the incomprehensibility of God in verse 6. He then proceeds to describe the omnipresence of God in verses 7-12. The Hebrew literally reads:

So wonderful is such knowledge that it is too much for me. It is so high that I cannot possibly reach up to it.

Delitzsch comments:

With מִמֶּנִּי the transcendence, with נִשְׁגָּבָה the unattainableness, and with לֹא-אוּכָל לָהּ the incomprehensibility of the fact of the omniscience of God is expressed, and with this, to the mind of the poet, coincides God's omnipresence.¹

The great British preacher, Charles Spurgeon, pointed out that in this passage David is saying:

I cannot grasp it. I can hardly endure to think of it. The theme overwhelms me. I am amazed and astounded at it. Such knowledge not only surpasses my comprehension, but even my imagination. Mount as I may, this truth is too lofty for my mind. It seems to be always above me, even when I soar into the loftiest regions of spiritual thought. Is it not so with every attribute of God? Can we attain to any idea of his power, his wisdom, his holiness? Our mind has no line with which to measure the Infinite. Do we therefore question? Say, rather, that we therefore believe and adore. We are not surprised that the Most glorious God should in his knowledge be high above all the knowledge to which we can attain; it must of necessity be so, since we are such poor limited beings; and when we stand a-tip-toe we cannot reach to the lowest step of the throne of the Eternal.²

The commentator David Dickson stated:

When we are about to look upon God's perfections, we should observe our own imperfections, and thereby learn to be the more modest in our searching of God's unsearchable perfection. Then do we see most of God, when we see him incomprehensible, and do see ourselves swallowed up in the thoughts of his perfection, and are forced to fall in admiration of God.³

Princeton's Prof. James Alexander commented:

Here we have a case which ought to instruct and sober those, who, in their shallow philosophy, demand a religion without mystery. It would be a religion without God; for "who by searching can find out God?"⁴

Only a fool would claim to comprehend the Almighty. God is too high and too wonderful for man to encompass within his puny mind:

Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised; And His greatness is *unsearchable*. (Ps. 145:3)

In the context, David had in view the greatness of God's nature and not just His works. He used the same Hebrew word as found in Job 5:9 and 9:10. We can search out the nature of God all we want but we will never comprehend it all:

"His understanding is *inscrutable*." (Isa. 40:28)

אין חקר לתבונתו:

The word חקר (search) is used once again by Isaiah in the sense that לתבונתו (God's knowledge) is beyond man's searching out, i.e., incomprehensible. When Isaiah thought about the knowledge of God, he was keenly aware that no one could fully understand or explain it. It was incomprehensible.

The greatest commentary on Isaiah in modern times was written by Dr. E. J. Young. His comments are worth remembering:

The language can only be understood as referring to the incomprehensibility of God. The people, while they might to a certain extent understand the ways of God, could never fully understand them. In bringing His promises of salvation and deliverance to fulfillment God exhibited a wisdom the Israelites could never wholly grasp. When God's redeemed people behold His understanding, they may to a degree understand that wondrous insight of God, but they cannot comprehend it. Their understanding of man is the understanding of a creature; it is there circumscribed and finite; the understanding of God is that of the Creator, and is therefore infinite. The finite mind cannot comprehend the infinite. Whereas, therefore, the finite mind can know God and apprehend Him as He has revealed Himself, nevertheless it cannot comprehend Him. In His understanding there is a depth and length and breadth that man's mind cannot grasp. God in all His attributes is incomprehensible.⁵

The New Testament writers were just as committed to the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God as their Old Testament counterparts:

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How *unsearchable* are His judgments and *unfathomable* His ways! (Rom. 11:33)

Ὡς βάθος πλούτου καὶ σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως θεοῦ· ὡς
ἀνεξεραύνητα τὰ κρίματα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνεξιχνίαστοι
αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτοῦ.

This is one of the most beautiful statements on the incomprehensibility of God in the New Testament. It is a doxological climax to Paul's discussion of election, predestination, God's sovereignty, and human responsibility in Romans 8-11.

The Apostle Paul calls us to worship a God who is beyond our capacity to comprehend fully in either His being or works. Paul states that God is ἀνεξεραύνητα (inscrutable) and ἀνεξιχνίαστοι (untraceable).

The word ἀνεξεραύνητα is a plural neuter of ἀνεξεραύνητος and is a combination of α plus ἐξερευνᾶω which means to search out or explore something until you understand it.

God's judgments are inscrutable, i.e. you may investigate all you want, but, in the end, you will have to throw your hands up and admit defeat. God's judgments are "incapable of being investigated as to their grounds or reason."⁶

The word ἀνεξιχνίαστοι is the nominative plural masculine of ἀνεξιχνίαστος which is a combination of α plus ἐξιχνιάζω which is derived from ἵχνος (footprint).⁷ Only used once in the New Testament, it is found in the Septuagint in such places as Job 5:9; 9:10; 13:24, etc. It offers a striking figure of speech.

When following someone in the desert, all you have to do is to trace their footprints in the sand. From their footprints, you can discover where they came from and where they are. But, when it comes to the ways of God, there are no footprints in the sand. You must throw up your hands in defeat and say, "God's path is untraceable!"

Dr. Randy Yeager comments:

God's thoughts, His philosophy, the rationale behind His decrees defy human analysis. The hiss of the serpent can be discerned unmistakably in the effort to find a theology that man can understand in all of its parts. Unregenerate philosophers and theologians would never write what Paul has written here, and they are contemptuous of what he has written. Their theology is clear to them because it is the product of their own intellectual creation.⁸

No one will ever understand the mind of the Lord. If someone could, he would “become His counselor,” for he who can understand God would be greater than God:

to know the love of Christ which *surpasses knowledge*.
(Eph. 3:19)

γινῶναί τε τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν τῆς γνώσεως
ἀγάπην τοῦ Χριστοῦ

For some reason, no English translation reveals the exact word order used by Paul. He wanted them to γινῶναί τε (know) that the love which Christ had for them and which led Him to die for their sins on the cross, was no ordinary love. It was a special *kind* of love. Christ’s love for them was a ὑπερβάλλουσαν τῆς γνώσεως kind of love, i.e., a “surpassing-knowledge” love.

The word ὑπερβάλλουσαν is the present active participle of ὑπερβάλλω. The prefix ὑπερ means “beyond.” The word βάλλω means “to throw or hurl.” When the two are combined they refer to something that is thrown so far beyond our reach that we cannot find it. Thus, the love of Christ is something which is far beyond our ability to comprehend.

The great Princeton theologian Charles Hodge comments:

It is the love of Christ, i.e., his love for us which passes knowledge. It is infinite; not only because it inheres in an infinite subject, but because the condescension and sufferings to which it led, and the blessings which it secures for its objects, are beyond our comprehension.⁹

Let us also point out that, if we begin with the *a priori* assumption that, if something cannot be fully explained, it must be rejected, then we must reject the love of Christ because it is “beyond our comprehension.” (Phillips Translation)

The peace of God, which *surpasses all comprehension*.
(Phil. 4:7)

καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ ὑπερέχουσα πάντα νοῦν

Paul once again qualifies the special *kind* of peace he is talking about. He specifies that the peace of God which he has in view is the kind that ἡ ὑπερέχουσα πάντα νοῦν.

The word ὑπερέχουσα is the present active participle of ὑπερέχω which is the combination of the prefix ὑπερ with the word ἔχω. It refers to that which goes beyond the grasp of man. It is used here as a participial adjective in the emphatic attributive position.

Paul then says ὑπερέχουσα πάντα νοῦν, he is emphasizing that the peace of God goes *beyond* all human reason and intelligence. To translate the word νοῦν as “knowledge” is far too weak. It refers to the intellect or the rational mind.¹⁰

The peace which comes from God is so mysterious in nature and effect that no human intellect will ever figure it out. It is “beyond the grasp of every human intellect.” William Hendriksen comments:

By nature man is totally unable to comprehend this wonderful peace as is a blind man to appreciate a glorious sunset (I Cor. 2:14). And even the believer will never be able fully to grasp the beauty of the Christ-centered gift that surpasses in value all other gifts of God to man.¹¹

If we are limited to only what can be precisely and fully understood and explained, then we will have to reject the peace of God as well as the love of Christ! But if we accept the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God, we can have both His peace and His love.

Conclusion

From just these few Scriptures it is abundantly clear that the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God is taught in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. This is exactly what Trinitarians expected to find in the Bible.

Cultists and modern theologians have it backwards. The incomprehensibility of the Trinity is not an argument against it, but actually an argument *for* it. Trinitarians view it as a plus and not as a minus.

The authors of Scripture were not embarrassed by the incomprehensibility of God. They did not apologize for it, but boasted of it. They did not agonize over it, but rejoiced in it. They were not driven away from God by it, but were drawn nigh unto God because of it. They did not curse the incomprehensible God, but fell at His feet in wonder, awe, and praise.

Notes

1. Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentaries on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), Biblical Commentary on the Psalms, 3:347.
2. Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1968), 3:260.
3. Ibid., 273.
4. Ibid., 274.
5. Edward J. Young, *Commentary on The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 3:67.
6. Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle To The Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 378.
7. William G.T. Shedd, *A Critical And Doctrinal Commentary On The Epistle Of St. Paul To The Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), 354. "The divine decisions being self-moved, and wholly internal, are not traceable by the finite intellect."
8. Randolph O. Yeager, *The Renaissance New Testament* (Gretna: Pelican, 1983), 12:117-118.
9. Charles Hodge, *Commentary On The Epistle To The Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 189.
10. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary Of The New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 2:478-479.
11. William Hendriksen, *A Commentary On The Epistle To The Philippians* (London: Banner of Truth, 1963), 197.

Part II

The Old Testament Evidence

Chapter Seven

A Multi-Personal God

Trinitarians believe that while there is only one God, numerically speaking, yet, within this one God, there exists more than one person, ego, intellect or self. This is the fundamental principle underlying the doctrine of the Trinity. Thus it does not make much sense to discuss how many Persons there are in the Godhead and how They relate to each other until you have first established the multi-personal nature of God.

What to Expect

If the authors of the Bible believed that God was multi-personal, then we would expect to find that they would write about God in such a way as to indicate this idea to their readers. Thus, we must ask, "What would we expect to find in the Bible, if its authors believed that God was multi-personal?"

On the other hand, if the authors of the Bible believed that God was only one person, i.e., they were classic Unitarians, then they would write about God in such a way as to indicate that idea. Thus, we are also warranted to ask, "What would we expect to find in the Bible, if Unitarians wrote it?"

We will at times use the term "Unitarian" in its generic sense of anyone who denies the Trinity because he believes that God is only one person. This would include Jews, Muslims, Arians, and Modalists.

Let us examine the Old Testament to see whose position is verified by the Hebrew text keeping in mind the basic question, "What must be in order for what is to be what it is?"

The Oneness of God

The first question is how did the biblical authors, under the inspiration of God, conceive of the oneness of God? There are nine different Hebrew words which at times are translated as the word "one:"

אֶלֹהִים, אֶחָד, נֶפֶשׁ, אִשָּׁה, אִישׁ,

אֶחָד(Chal.), בָּרָד, גַּם, אֶחָד,

While such words as אִישׁ (man) or אִשָּׁה (woman) are sometimes translated “one,” they are never applied to God. Since God is not a man or a woman (Num. 23:19), this is what we would expect to find. The same applies to the word נֶפֶשׁ (soul) which is never used to speak of the oneness of God.

The question that comes to mind at this point is, if Unitarians wrote the Bible, which word for oneness would they apply to God? Out of all the words above, there is only one word which would indicate that God is one solitary person. If this word is applied to God in the Bible, this would be quite damaging to the Trinitarian position.

The word is יָחִיד and means an absolute or solitary oneness.¹ It is even translated “solitary” in Psalm 68:6 (יָחִידִים) and refers to someone who is absolutely alone. This is its general meaning throughout Scripture.²

Unitarians should naturally expect to find that the word יָחִיד was applied to God in the Bible. On the other hand, Trinitarians would not expect to find יָחִיד used of God because they believe that there are three Persons within the Godhead.

Whose Expectations Are Fulfilled?

When we turn to the Bible, what do we find? The authors of Scripture never applied יָחִיד to God. They never described God as a *solitary* person. This is quite damaging to the Unitarian position.

The Word אֶחָד

In the list of Hebrew words which speak of oneness, the word אֶחָד refers to a compound oneness in which a number of things together are described as “one.”³ The following sample passages illustrate this compound meaning of oneness:

1. Gen. 1:5: The יוֹם אֶחָד (first day) is a combination of two things—the evening and the morning.
2. Gen. 2:24: Adam and Eve became לֶבָשָׁר אֶחָד (one flesh). They were one, but two and two, but one.
3. Gen. 3:22: Adam and Eve became “one” (אֶחָד) with God. But they did not lose their personhood when they became “one” with God.
4. Gen. 11:6: The people were one (אֶחָד). They were, thus, “one” and “many” at the same time.
5. Gen. 34:16, 22: The Shechemites wanted to become “one people” (לְעַם אֶחָד) with the Jews.

6. II Chron. 30:12: God gave the people “one heart” (לֵב אֶחָד). Obviously, the thousands of individual hearts were “one” in a compound or composite sense.

7. Ezra 2:64: The “congregation” (בְּלִתְקַל) of forty two thousand, three hundred and sixty persons was described as “one” (כְּאַחָד).

8. Jer. 32:39: Under the New Covenant, God will give His people “one heart” (לֵב אֶחָד).

The passages above are just a small sample of the many times אֶחָד is used of compound oneness. But it is enough to demonstrate beyond all doubt that the Old Testament, from the Law to the Prophets, used אֶחָד to express a unified or compound oneness.

Who Would Use אֶחָד?

A Unitarian would never apply the Hebrew word אֶחָד to God because it means a compound or unified oneness. If the authors of the Bible were Unitarians, we would not expect to find אֶחָד applied to God.

On the other hand, if the writers of Scripture believed that God was multi-personal, then we would expect to find that they would apply אֶחָד to God because this would mean that God is “one” in a composite or compound sense. As a matter of fact, אֶחָד is the *only* available Hebrew word they could use to express this idea.

When we open the Bible, what do we find? We find that אֶחָד is applied to God. He is “one” in the sense of compound oneness. This is so central to the Old Testament concept of God that it is found in Israel’s Great Confession:

שִׁמְעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד:

“Hear, O Israel, [Yahweh] our God, Yahweh is one!” (Deut. 6:4)

The use of אֶחָד in Deut. 6:4 is exactly what Trinitarians expect to find in the Bible because it is the only way in the Hebrew language to indicate to the reader that God is a composite unity of several Persons and not just a solitary person. There are no other words in the Hebrew language by which such an idea could be expressed.

But how can this be the true understanding of אֶחָד when the Jews today reject the doctrine of the Trinity? The noted Hebrew scholar, David Cooper, explains:

Prior to the days of Moses Maimonides, the unity of God was expressed by **אֱלֹהִים** which, as has been proved beyond a doubt, has as its primary meaning that of a compound unity. Maimonides, who drafted the thirteen articles of faith, in the second one sets forth the unity of God, using the word **יְהוָה** which in the Tenach is never used to express God's unity. From these facts it is evident that a new idea was injected into this confession by substituting **יְהוָה** which in every passage carries the primary idea of oneness in the absolute sense for **אֱלֹהִים** which primarily means a compound unity. Hence from the days of Maimonides on, an interpretation different from the ancient one was placed upon this most important passage.¹

When you consider the use of **אֱלֹהִים** in reference to God and the fact that **יְהוָה** are never applied to God, the implication is obvious. God is a compound unity, i.e., multi-personal.

Singular and Plural Words

If the authors of Scripture believed there was only one God, how could they express this idea in the Hebrew language? The only way, in terms of Hebrew grammar, was to use singular nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs in reference to God. Thus, they would refer to God as "He,"

"Him," and "His" and describe God as saying, "I," "Myself," and "Me." Both Unitarians and Trinitarians would expect to find the authors of Scripture using such words in reference to God.

But, if they also believed that God was multi-personal, the only way this idea could be indicated in the Hebrew was to use plural nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and verbs. They would also refer to God as "They," "Them," and "Theirs" and describe God as saying, "We," "Us," and "Ours."

Singular Words

While both Trinitarians and Unitarians expect to find singular words applied to God, because they both believe there is only one God numerically speaking, only Trinitarians expect to find plural words used of God as well. We have yet to see a Unitarian book in which God is referred to as "They" or "Them." But this is standard practice in Trinitarian books.

An example of a singular name for God is found in Numbers 23:19:

“God (אל) is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”

In this verse, God is given the name אל which is a singular noun. All the verbs which modify אל in this verse are singular as well. The divine name אל is transliterated in such places as Gen. 33:20 (*EL*-Elohe-Israel).

God is called בורא (Creator) in Isaiah 40:28, which is the singular form of the verb ברא. He is also called יוצר (Maker) in Isaiah 45:11, which is the singular form of יצר. Since there is only one God, we are not surprised to find singular nouns and verbs used of God.

Plural Words

But when it comes to plural nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs, this is not something which a Unitarian would expect to be applied to God in the Bible. We have yet to hear a Unitarian refer to God as “Them.” But this would be exactly what a Trinitarian would expect to find in the Bible.

If God is multi-personal, then we would expect to find God saying, “We,” “Us,” or “Our” as well as “I,” “Myself,” or “Me” because God is One and Three at the same time. The doctrine of the Trinity requires the plural as well as the singular while Unitarianism only requires the singular.

Who Is Right?

Did the authors of the Bible use plural words for God? Yes, they did. The plural form of אל is אלהים, which is the most frequently used word for “God” in the Bible (i.e., Gen. 1:1).

The word אלהים is translated as “gods” over four hundred times in the Bible. That it is a true plural is seen from the fact that it has plural verbs and plural adjectives modifying it. Several examples will suffice to demonstrate this point:

1. In Genesis 20:13a, we read:

And it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father's house

וַיְהִי כַאֲשֶׁר הִתְעוּ אֹתִי אֱלֹהִים מִבֵּית אָבִי

The divine name is אֱלֹהִים and the verb which modifies it is הִתְעוּ (cause to wander) which is the plural form of תָּעָה. It can be translated, "When they, i.e., God, caused me to wander from my father's house."

2. In Genesis 35:7 we read, "They, i.e., God, revealed themselves to him."

כִּי שָׁם נִגְלוּ אֵלָיו הָאֱלֹהִים

The verb נִגְלוּ (revealed) is the plural form of נָלַח and modifies אֱלֹהִים (God):

3. The word אֱלֹהִים in Exodus 21:6; 22:7-8, 27-28 refers to the "judges" of Israel. It is impossible to deny the composite nature of these judges.

4. In Deuteronomy 4:7 we read:

כִּי מִיָּגוּי גָדוֹל אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ אֱלֹהִים קָרְבִּים אֵלָיו
כִּי־הָיָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּכָל־קְרָאנוּ אֵלָיו:

The word קָרְבִּים (coming near) in Deut. 4:7 is a plural form of the word קָרַב and modifies אֱלֹהִים.

5. In Joshua 24:19 the word קְדָשִׁים ("holy") is a plural adjective which modifies אֱלֹהִים and can be translated, "God, i.e., the Holy Ones."

6. David said in Psalm 58:11(v.12 in Heb.):

Surely there is a God who judges on earth!

אֶדְ-פָּרִי לְעֹדִיק אֶדְ יִשְׁ-אֱלֹהִים שֹׁפְטִים בָּאָרֶץ:

David used the verb שֹׁפְטִים "judges" in its plural form. A literal translation would be, "They, i.e., God, who judges the earth."

Besides the plural noun אֱלֹהִים and all its plural modifiers, the authors of the Bible used other plural nouns as well:

1. The second most popular name for God in the Old Testament is אֲדֹנָי (Adonai, i.e., "Lord") which is a plural noun. Thus, the two

most frequently used names for God (אֱלֹהִים and אֲדֹנָי) in the Hebrew Bible are both plural nouns. This is not what we would expect if Unitarians wrote the Bible. But it is exactly what we would expect if the authors of the Bible believed that God was multi-personal.

2. Job 35:10 refers to God as the “Makers” of mankind. The word עֹשֵׂי (Makers) is a plural participle of עָשָׂה.

3. In Psalm 149:2, we read:

Let Israel be glad in his Maker; Let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King.

שִׂמְחָה יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֹשֵׂיו בְּנִי-צִיּוֹן יִגִּילוּ בַּמֶּלֶךְ:

David uses the masculine plural בְּעֹשֵׂיו “Makers” to refer to the God of Israel. What Unitarian would ever speak of God as his “Makers”? Only Trinitarians do this.

4. Ecclesiastes 12:1 tells us וּזְכֹר אֶת-בּוֹרְאֶיךָ (“Remember now your Creators”). The word בּוֹרְאֶיךָ (“Creators”) is a masculine plural participle.

5. Isaiah 54:5 speaks of God as the “Makers” of Israel. The word “Makers” in the Hebrew is עֹשֵׂי which is a plural participle.

The Trinitarian has no problem whatsoever understanding how God can be described in the Bible as both the “Maker” and “Makers” of the universe at the same time because the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were all involved in the work of creation. But the Unitarian is hard put to explain why the Bible speaks of a plurality of Creators.

Gobbledygook

Trinitarians are often accused of theological gobbledygook when they say that, since God is one and three at the same time, God is both “Creator” and “Creators” at the same time. But this is exactly what the Hebrew text does. The same words for “Creator” and “Maker” are used in both their singular and plural forms.

Plural Pronouns

What about plural pronouns? Does God ever speak in the first person plural by using such terms as "Us," "We," and "Our"? If the authors of the Bible were Unitarian in belief, then we would not expect to find God speaking in the plural. But if Trinitarianism is true, then that is exactly what we would expect to find in the Bible.

The evidence is clear that plural pronouns are used in reference to God in the following passages:

Then God said, "Let **Us** make man **Our** image, according to **Our** likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Gen. 1:26- 27)

First, the word "make" (עָשָׂה) in the phrase "Let us *make* man" is a plural verb. The Hebrew grammar cannot be ignored. The main verb as well as the pronouns are *all* plural. This would indicate that God is the "Us" and "Our" who is speaking.

Second, that the plural pronouns refer to God and not to angels is clear from the *singular* nouns "image" and "likeness." Man is not created in the two images or two likenesses — God's and the angels. We are created in the image and likeness of God.

Third, this is also demonstrated by the repetition of the word "image" in verse 27. If the "image" in which man was created was reflective of angels as well as God, it would not have been rendered in the singular, but in the plural.

Fourth, some anti-Trinitarians have attempted to dismiss the passage as an example of the plural of majesty (*pluralis majestaticus*), much like Queen Victoria of England who is reported to have said, "We are not amused."

The only problem with this argument is that there was no plural of majesty in the Hebrew language during biblical times. Rabbi Tzvi Nassi, a lecturer in Hebrew at Oxford University, explains:

Every one who is acquainted with the rudiments of the Hebrew and Chaldee languages, must know that God, in the holy Writings, very often spoke of Himself in the plural. The passages are numerous, in which, instead of a grammatical

agreement between the subject and predicate, we meet with a construction, which some modern grammarians, who possess more of the so-called philosophical than of the real knowledge of the Oriental languages, call a *pluralis excellentiae*. This helps them out of every apparent difficulty. Such a *pluralis excellentiae* was, however, a thing unknown to Moses and the prophets. Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, David, and all the other kings, throughout חִינִיך (the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa) speak in the singular, and not as modern kings in the plural. They do not say *we*, but *I*, command; as in Gen. xli. 41; Dan. iii. 29; Ezra i. 2, etc.⁵

An Amazing Hoax

During the nineteenth century debates between Unitarians and Trinitarians, the principle of *pluralis majestaticus* was revealed to be a hoax popularized by the famous Jewish scholar Gesenius. It became clear that he used it as a *ruse de guerre* against Christianity.

The fundamental error resided in the attempt to take a modern monarchical idiosyncrasy and read it back into an ancient text when such an idiosyncrasy was unknown at that time. Richard Davies in 1891 pointed out, "Indeed, this royal style is unknown in Scripture."⁶

What is astounding is that, one hundred years later, the anti-Trinitarians are still using this hoax to dodge the significance of the use of plural pronouns in reference to God. They seem to be totally ignorant of the fact that it is a recent grammatical invention and, thus, cannot be read back into ancient times or texts.

We must also point out that anti-Trinitarians now apply the principle of *pluralis majestaticus* to all plural words of God when the principle really only relates to direct discourse, i.e., "Us" and "Our" passages. It is even invoked as a way to explain away the significance of the plural word אֱלֹהִים in such places as Genesis 1:1. But since Genesis 1:1 is not a direct discourse, the appeal to a supposed "plurality of majesty" is nothing more than a ruse.

The Fall of Man

Then [Yahweh] God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us." (Gen. 3:22)

God said that man “has become one with Us.” There is nothing in the context to indicate that God was speaking to angels. Thus the “Us” is God and reveals His multi-personal nature.

The Tower of Babel

“Come, let Us go down and, confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.” So [Yahweh] scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there [Yahweh] confused the language of the whole earth; and from there [Yahweh] scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth. (Gen. 11:7-9)

The words “come” and “confuse” are both plural verbs. This fact, when combined with the plural pronouns and the identification of the “Us” as none other than Yahweh in the subsequent verses, makes the attempt to introduce angels as the ones to whom God is speaking, highly unlikely. When angels do have a hand in punishing man, they are given due credit (Gen. 19:1-26, etc.). No credit is given to the angels because they were not involved.

The Call of Isaiah

Then I heard the voice of [Yahweh], saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isa. 6:8)

Isaiah was called and sent by the Divine “Us.” Nowhere are angels introduced in the context. The “Us” is Yahweh speaking as a multi-personal Being. There is not a single text in all of Scripture where a prophet is described as a spokesman of angels.

Plural Persons

Another thing which Trinitarians expect to find in the Bible is that there will be places where it is clear that more than one person is God. This is decidedly not what Unitarians expect to find.

There are several passages where two divine persons are both called “God” in the sense of both being the one true God. The first passage is found in Genesis 19:24:

Then Yahweh rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Yahweh out of heaven.

וַיַּהֲרֹג יְהוָה אֶת-סֹדֹם וְאֶת-עֲמֹרָה בְּחֵטְאֵיהֶן וּבַחֲמַת יְהוָה מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם:

This passage is remarkable regardless of how you deal with it. It simply states that there are two divine Persons: One on the earth and One in the heavens. Each Person is called יְהוָה (Yahweh).

The first יְהוָה (Yahweh) who is on earth brings down brimstone and fire from the second יְהוָה (Yahweh) who is in the heavens. It is easy to see why this passage has irritated anti-Trinitarians for centuries.

What are we to make of it? The Council of Sirmium decreed, "the Son of God brought down the rain from God the Father."⁷ This was the clear interpretation of the Early Church.

The great German Reformer Martin Luther commented:

We may note also the fact that Moses here says that the Lord (Jehovah) rained fire and brimstone from the Lord (Jehovah). This mode of speaking greatly irks the Jews and they try in vain to explain it. But Moses mentions Jehovah twice to show that there is but one God, but that in this one God there are three distinct persons.⁸

One alternate interpretation is that the second Yahweh is simply a repetition for emphasis sake.⁹ But this interpretation has several insurmountable problems.

First, is it not clear that Moses is *contrasting* heaven and earth? Yes! Can anyone deny that they are juxtaposed? The fire comes *down* from the heavens to the earth *below*.

Is it not also clear that the two Yahwehs are part of this contrast? Yes. Are not the two Yahwehs clearly juxtaposed in the text? Yes. Just as the heavens cannot be interpreted as a repetition of the earth, neither can the first Yahweh be interpreted as a repetition of the second Yahweh.

The second problem with this interpretation is that there are no other passages in the Pentateuch where a name is repeated once at the beginning and again at the end for emphasis sake. Thus there is no evidence that Moses ever used such a literary device.

Dr. Herbert Leupold, who wrote one of the best commentaries on the book of Genesis in the 20th century, stated:

We believe that the view which the church held on this problem from days of old is still the simplest and the best: *Pluit Deus filius a Deo patre* = "God the Son brought down the rain from God the Father," as the Council of Sirmium worded the statement. To devalue the statement of the text to mean less necessitates a similar process of devaluation of a number of other texts like 1:26, and only by such a process can the claim be supported that there are no indications of the doctrine of the Trinity in Genesis. We believe the combined weight of these passages, including Genesis 1:1,2, makes the conclusion inevitable that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is in a measure revealed in the Old Testament, and especially in Genesis. Why should not so fundamental a doctrine made manifest from the beginning? We may see more of this truth than did the Old Testament saints, but the Church has through the ages always held one and the same truth. Luther says: "This expression indicates two persons in the Godhead."¹⁰

This is exactly the kind of text that the Trinitarian expects to find in the Bible.

Psalms 45:6-7 is another passage which bears close attention:

Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; Therefore God, Thy God, has anointed Thee with the oil of joy above Thy fellows.

כִּסֵּאֲךָ אֱלֹהִים עוֹלָם וָעֶד שֶׁבֶט מִיֶּשֶׁר שֶׁבֶט מַלְכוּתְךָ:
אָהַבְתָּ צֶדֶק וַחֲשָׁנָה רָשָׁע עַל־כֵּן מִשְׁחָךְ אֱלֹהִים
אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׁמֵן שֶׁשֶׁן מַחְבְּרֶיךָ:

David is clearly addressing the one true God when he says, "Thy throne, O God," because the throne of the person being addressed is "for ever and ever," i.e., eternal. Eternity is an attribute of deity.

Also, in other psalms, David identifies that throne as Yahweh's throne (Ps. 11:4) from which in heaven He rules over all things (Ps. 103:19) for eternity (Ps. 93:2). This cannot be applied to David or to Solomon or to any other earthly king.

If this is all the passage said, no one would have the least difficulty in identifying God as the One to whom David is praying. The problem for the anti-Trinitarian is that David goes on to speak of God as being anointed by God!

How can the God of Israel sitting on His throne ruling the universe be anointed by God? For the Trinitarian, this is no problem at all. But for the Unitarian, this text represents a huge problem.

The historic Christian interpretation is that "it is clear from this passage that there are at least two Divine Personalities who are eternal and omnipotent."¹¹ This was the ancient Jewish view as well. The classic German commentator, Franz Delitzsch, explains:

The Epistle to the Hebrew (ch. i. 8) proceeds on the assumption that it is the future Christ, the Son of God. It is supported in this view by a tradition of the ancient synagogue, in accordance with which the Targumist renders ver. 3, "Thy beauty, O King Messiah, is greater than those of the children of men." This Messianic interpretation must be very ancient.¹²

The greatest of the classic commentaries on the Psalms was written by the German scholar Hengstenberg. He pointed out:

The Messianic expositors take Elohim as the vocative, O God, in unison with: O hero, in ver. 3. That this exposition must be one that most readily and naturally occurs, appears even from the fact, that all the old translators, with whom also concurs the Ep. to the Hebrews, express the vocative.¹³

The Inescapable Vocative

The anti-Trinitarians have attempted to escape this passage by translating **אלהים כסאך** not as the vocative "Your throne O God," but as "God is your throne" in order to avoid the obvious truth that there are two persons in this passage who are both called **אלהים**.

After surveying all the attempts to translate the words in some other way than "O God," Hengstenberg states that "they have not been able to bring forward anything grammatically tenable."¹⁴ He concludes that "the construction of Elohim as vocative is the only one which can be grammatically justified."¹⁵ As Prof. Plumer pointed out in his classic commentary on the Psalms:

Strenuous efforts have been made to turn aside this passage from its obvious and inspired interpretation.¹⁶

The underlying reason as to why anti-Trinitarians try so hard to escape the obvious meaning of the text is pointed out by Hengstenberg:

We can only ascribe it to the power which a prejudice, having once obtained a firm footing for itself at the beginning of rationalism, even now exerts over the minds of men, when a more impartial view of things is wont to be taken.¹⁷

We are once again thrown back to the issue of *a priori* assumptions. The liberal and the cultist assume that the Bible *cannot* speak of God as multi-personal. Thus, they always end up in circular reasoning instead of being open to the evidence.

The Lord Sent Me

Another passage which should be noted is Isaiah 48:12-17:

"Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called; I am He, I am the first, I am also the last. Surely My hand founded the earth, and My right hand spread out the heavens; When I call to them, they stand together. Assemble, all of you, and listen! Who among them has declared these things? [Yahweh] or the LORD loves him; he shall carry out His good pleasure on Babylon, and His arm shall be against the Chaldeans. I, even I, have spoken; indeed I have called him, I have brought him, and He will make his ways successful. Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, from the time it took place, I was there. And now the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit."

The identity of the speaker is clearly the God of Israel because He calls Himself "the first and last" in verse 12. This title had already been used of Yahweh of Hosts in Isaiah 44:6:

"Thus says [Yahweh], the King of Israel and his Redeemer, [Yahweh] of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.'"

The Hebrew for "I am the first and I am the last" is the same in Isaiah 44:6 and 48:12: **אֲנִי רִאשׁוֹן אֶף אֲנִי אַחֲרִיִן**. This God is further identified as "the Yahweh of armies" in Isaiah 44:6.

The divine title "the first and the last" means that He is the first God and the last God because there are no other gods before or after Him. He alone is God.

The speaker in Isa. 48 is further identified by doing things which only God can do such as absolute foreknowledge (vs. 3,5,6), creation (v.13), sovereignty (v.15), and omnipresence (v.16).

Who else but the one true God could say:

"For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; For how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another." (Isa. 48:11)

No one should have the slightest difficulty in identifying the speaker as God. The context of the passage and the grammar of the text are both very clear. But prejudiced anti-Trinitarians must object because the God who is speaking says that He, along with the Holy Spirit, are sent by God.¹⁸

"Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, from the time it took place, I was there. And now the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit." (Isa. 48:16)

If the passage is interpreted in its natural and normal meaning, there are three persons in this passage who are all God! But how can God be sent by God unless there are several Persons within the Godhead? Since the Father sent the Son and the Spirit in Trinitarian theology, this is exactly the kind of passage which we expect to find.

How can non-Trinitarians handle a passage like this? They can't. So they deny that the speaker is God and claim that it is actually Isaiah who is speaking in either verse 16b or the whole of verse 16!

The attempt to interject Isaiah into verse 16 falls before the following questions:

1. Is there anything in the Hebrew text to indicate a break in the speech of Jehovah? No.
2. Does Isaiah elsewhere in his book dare to interrupt the Almighty and to insert himself? No.
3. Is there any evidence whatsoever in the text to indicate that anyone else besides God is speaking? No.

4. Has any translation ever separated verse 16 from the rest of Jehovah's speech? No.
5. Does the Septuagint make a break in verse 16? No.
6. Do the Targums? No.

This passage is clear proof that the authors of the Bible believed that God was multi-personal. A Trinitarian would not have the least hesitation to write the text as it stands. But Unitarians, Arians, Modalists, and Muslims could never do so.

The Prophet Hosea

Isaiah is not the only prophet to depict God as the divine speaker and have Him refer to another person as God. The prophet Hosea recorded Yahweh (from verse 2) as saying:

"But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by [Yahweh] their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses, or horsemen." (Hosea 1:7)

וְאֶת־בֵּית יְהוּדָה אֲרַחֵם וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּים בַּיהוָה
אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְלֹא אֲשִׁיעֵם בְּקֶשֶׁת וּבַחֶרֶב וּבַמִּלְחָמָה
בְּסוּסִים וּבַפָּרָשִׁים:

If *I* as the first person promise to do something for *you* as the second person through a *third* person, am I not implying that I am *not* the same as the third person? If grammar means anything, the answer is, "Yes".

When Yahweh as the first person promised to deliver Israel as the second person by a third person called Yahweh, what other conclusion can we logically come to than that there are two persons each called Yahweh?

The "classic" commentary on the Minor Prophets was written by E.B. Pusey. He noted that the "Yahweh their God" through whom the deliverance came was none other than the Angel of Yahweh when he "smote in one night 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians."¹⁹ How was the deliverance accomplished?

The Father by the Son (in like way as it said, *Yahweh rained upon Sodom fire from Yahweh.*) They were saved in Christ, Yahweh and God of all, not by carnal weapons of warfare, but by the might of Him Who saved them, and shook thrones and

dominions, and Who by His Cross triumphed over the hosts of the adversaries, and overcame the powers of evil.²⁰

The “Yahweh their God” was clearly a different person from the “Yahweh” who was speaking. Yet, they each were יהוה. While this is what Trinitarians expect to find in the Bible, Unitarians are continually frustrated by such passages.

That the authors of Scripture believed that God was multi-personal can also be found in passages concerning the angel of Yahweh and the theophanies. This material is so vast that we must devote separate chapters to each subject.

Conclusion

The material presented in this chapter demonstrates that the one true God of Scripture was conceived of by the Patriarchs and the prophets as being multi-personal. The fundamental principle of the doctrine of the Trinity has been verified by the Old Testament.

Notes

1. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), 402. This book will be referred to as B.D.B. from now on.
2. It is found in Gen. 22:2,12,16; Jud. 11:34; Ps. 22:22 (21); 25:16; 35:17; 68:6 (7); Prov. 4:3; Jer. 6:26; Amos 8:10; Zech. 12:10.
3. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, 25f.
4. David L. Cooper, *The Eternal God Revealing Himself* (Harrisburg: Evangelical Press, 1928), 59-60.
5. Tzvi Nassi, *The Great Mystery* (Jerusalem: Yanetz, 1970), 6.
6. Richard Davies, *Doctrine of the Trinity* (New York: Cranston & Stowe, 1891), 227.
7. John Peter Lange, *Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), 1:438.
8. Martin Luther, *Luther's Commentary on Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 354.
9. John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 1:512.
10. Herbert Carl Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), 570-571.
11. Cooper, 47.
12. Keil and Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 2:73-74.
13. E. W. Hengstenberg, *The Works of Hengstenberg* (Cherry Hill, NJ: Mack, n.d.), 6:133.
14. Ibid., 133.
15. Ibid., 134.
16. W.S. Plumer, *Psalms* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975), 516.

17. Hengstenberg, 124.

18. The issue of whether the Spirit is sent by God along with the Speaker or whether the Speaker is sent by God and the Spirit, is not germane at this point. The Hebrew text reads, "And now Yahweh has sent me and His Spirit."

19. E.B. Pusey's commentary book, *The Minor Prophets*, was republished in *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965), *Minor Prophets*, 1:23.

20. Ibid., 24.

Chapter Eight

The Theophanies

One of the most interesting subjects in Old Testament theology is what Trinitarian theologians have called “theophany.” Because of the vast number of passages involved, the theophanies constitute one of the major arguments not only for the multi-personal nature of God, but also for the Incarnation and the deity of Jesus Christ.

The word “theophany” comes from two Greek words—*θεός* and *φαίνω* which simply mean *the appearance of God in human form*. These appearances were brief periods of time during which the one true God came to earth in the form of a man.

As a man, God walked, talked, ate and fellowshiped with other men. During these times God could be seen by the human eye, touched by the human hand, and heard by the human ear. God was literally manifested in the flesh and dwelt among us. The Invisible became Visible and the Immaterial became Material without ceasing at any time to be true deity.

If it is true that God took upon Himself human form in the Old Testament, this would prepare the way for the Incarnation of the Son of God in the New Testament. Thus, the Trinitarian is not surprised at all to find numerous theophanies in the Old Testament.

On the other hand, Unitarians have always had a hard time coping with the concept of God appearing as a man in Old Testament times because it sounds uncomfortably close to the Incarnation. Thus it is no surprise to find that they generally omit any reference to the theophanies or simply dismiss it as myth. But neither method satisfies those who desire scholarship instead of prejudice.

The Trinity as a Solution to a Problem

The theophanies are also further proof of the multi-personal concept of God in that the doctrine of the Trinity offers the only way out of what appears to be a clear contradiction within Scripture. The apostle John tells us in John 1:18:

No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.

θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν
εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.

The grammar of the Greek text cannot be denied. It is a universal negative. No one at any time has ever seen God. But what are we going to do with all those other Scriptures where we are told that some men have seen God? For example, Isaiah the prophet testified:

“Then I said, ‘Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.’” (Isa. 6:5)

וְאָמַר אֲוִי־לִי כִי־נִדְמִיתִי כִּי אִישׁ טָמֵא־שִׁפְתִּים
אֲנִכִּי וּבַחֲדָךְ עַם־טָמֵא שִׁפְתִּים אֲנִכִּי יוֹשֵׁב
כִּי אַתָּה־מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת רָאוּ עֵינַי:

The Hebrew literally says:

The King, Yahweh of armies, my eyes have seen.

הַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת רָאוּ עֵינַי

An Apparent Contradiction

The Trinitarian has no problem whatsoever solving this apparent contradiction. Since God is multi-personal, it is possible for one of the Persons within the Godhead to be seen while the others are not seen. John 1:18 is only saying that no one has ever seen God the Father although they have seen God the Son. Thus, there is no contradiction as long as you accept the multi-personal nature of God.

But, if God is a single person as Unitarians assume, then there is no way out of this contradiction. Perhaps this is one reason why Unitarians were the first to give up the inspiration of the Bible. Without the doctrine of the Trinity, they were left with too many irresolvable contradictions.

What We Expect to Find

If the Trinitarian doctrine of theophany is true, then we expect to find passages in the Bible where God manifested Himself in human form as a

man. Let us see if the Bible does in fact record appearances of the God-man on earth.

God Appeared

Our first thesis is that throughout biblical history we are told that God physically "appeared" to various people. The following chart gives us the salient facts concerning the biblical passages where we are told that God appeared to man:

The Text	Name of God	Person	"appeared"
Gen. 12:7	יְהוָה	Abraham	רָאָה
18:1	יְהוָה	Abraham	רָאָה
26:2	יְהוָה	Isaac	רָאָה
24	יְהוָה	Isaac	רָאָה
35:1	אֵל	Jacob	רָאָה
9	אֱלֹהִים	Jacob	רָאָה
48:3	אֵל שְׁדֵי	Jacob	רָאָה
Exod. 3:16	יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי	Moses	רָאָה
4:5	יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי	Moses	רָאָה
6:3	יְהוָה	Abraham, Isaac, Jacob	רָאָה
Lev. 9:4	יְהוָה	Aaron	רָאָה
16:2	יְהוָה	Aaron	רָאָה
Deut. 31:15	יְהוָה	Moses, Joshua	רָאָה
I Sam. 3:21	יְהוָה	Samuel	רָאָה
I Kings 3:5	יְהוָה	Solomon	רָאָה
9:2	יְהוָה	Solomon	רָאָה
11:9	יְהוָה	Solomon	רָאָה
II Chron. 3:1	יְהוָה	David	רָאָה
7:12	יְהוָה	Solomon	רָאָה

First, the Hebrew verb רָאָה means that these appearances were a literal manifestation of God in some kind of physical form which could be seen and heard by man. It was not a vision within the head, but a literal appearance before the eyes (Gen. 18:2). The word רָאָה is the normal Hebrew word to describe what is exposed to the eye of man.

Second, since every name of God is included from Yahweh to El Shaddai, there is no way to escape the deity of these manifestations. The attempt to downplay these appearances as something less than God is simply not possible. They cannot be reduced to created angels.

The Form of Yahweh

The main stumbling block for most Unitarians is the idea that God could take a physical form. But they are missing the point. The Trinitarian is not saying that a physical form is part of the eternal essential nature of God. In His essence, God is spirit and hence has no body or form (John 4:24; Luke 24:39). God is not a man in His essence or being (Num. 23:19). The Mormons with their pantheon of embodied male and female deities are gross polytheists and not Trinitarians in any sense.

But the Bible is also clear that God “appeared” in such a way that He could be seen and heard, i.e., God took upon Himself a literal physical form. In Numbers 12:6-8, we read the following words:

He said, “Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household; With him I speak mouth to mouth, even openly, and not in dark sayings, *and he beholds the form of the LORD*. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?”

There was a significant difference between how God usually gave revelations to the prophets and how He spoke to Moses. God used visions and dreams with the regular prophets (v.7). But with Moses, He did something different (v.8):

פֶּה אֶל־פֶּה אִדְבָּר־בוֹ וּמֵרָאָה וְלֹא בַחֲדָרָה
וַחֲמֹנֶת יְהוָה יִבֵּיט וּמֵדוּעַ לֹא יֵרָאֶתָם לְדָבָר
בְּעֵבְרִי בְמֹשֶׁה:

Moses was allowed to see יהוה וַחֲמֹנֶת “the form of Yahweh.” When combined with פֶּה אֶל־פֶּה “mouth to mouth,” it means that Yahweh allowed Moses to see His physical form and they spoke as one man

speaks to another, i.e., mouth to mouth. The word רִמְמַנָּה “form” means a physical or material form.¹ Keil and Delitzsch comment:

“*Mouth to mouth*” answers to the “face to face” in Ex. xxxiii. 11 (cf. Deut. xxxiv. 10), i.e., without mediation or reserve, but with the same closeness and freedom with which friends converse together (Ex. xxxiii. 11)” *The form (Eng. similitude) of Jehovah*” was not the essential nature of God, His unveiled glory, for this no mortal man can see (vid. Ex. xxxiii. 18 sqq.), but a form which manifested the invisible God to the eye of man in a clearly discernible mode.²

What Kind of Form?

Since we have already demonstrated that God “appeared” in some kind of physical “form,” we are warranted to ask in what kind of “form” did God appear? What did this “form” look like?

The words פֶּה אֶל־פֶּה “mouth to mouth” mean that whatever the “form” of Yahweh was, it had a mouth which could speak. A mouth requires a face and a face requires a head and a head requires a body. In other words, the physical form of Yahweh was a human body. That this is so will be demonstrated conclusively by an examination of the following passages.

Genesis 3:8

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת־קוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מְתַהַלֵּךְ בְּגֵן לְרוֹחַ
הַיּוֹם וַיִּתְּחַבֵּא הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים
בְּחוּץ עֵץ הָגֵן:

After Adam and Eve had fallen into sin, towards the evening when cool breezes swept the garden, they heard the sound of יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים “Yahweh God” as He came to them in the form of a man.

As He walked through the garden, the rustling of the leaves and the snapping of the twigs reminded them that it was time once again to commune with their Creator. His loving voice would call out to them to come to Him like a loving Father calls his children. "Adam, where are you?" was not said in anger, but in love.

Up until now, the appearance of God and His calling them had been their delight. They always rushed to be in His presence. They had so many questions to ask Him and He was always so patient in His answers. But now, the sound of His walking in the garden seized them with panic. Since they could hear the direction from which God was walking, they ran the other way and hid themselves behind a tree.

The hiding of man behind a tree makes sense only if they were hiding from someone they could see and hear. They were not so stupid as to think that they could escape the omniscience of God. But they could hide from a Man walking down the path. It is self-evident that when you hide behind a tree from someone, that person is on the other side of the tree. A physical hiding presupposes a physical form of God.

The Hebrew text is quite striking in its vividness. This was not the first time God visited them as a Man. The word סָתַרְתָּ לָךְ "walking up and down" is a masculine singular participle and indicates a regular habit of walking around the garden. Smith explains that:

Jehovah appears here as the owner of the Paradise, and is taking his daily exercise; for the verb is in the reflexive conjugation, and means "walking for pleasure."³

As Keil and Delitzsch point out:

He comes to them as one man to another. This was the earliest form of divine revelation. God conversed with the first man in a visible shape, as the Father and Instructor of His children. He did not adopt this mode for the first time after the fall, but employed it as far back as the period when He brought the beasts to Adam, and gave him the woman to be his wife (Chap. ii. 19,22). This human mode of intercourse between man and God is not a mere figure of speech, but a reality, having its foundation in the nature of humanity, or rather in the fact that man was created in the image of God.⁴

The sound they heard was not a sudden thunderstorm which some liberal commentators have suggested:

The man and his wife hid themselves from Jehovah God among the trees of the garden, as soon as they heard the sound of His footsteps. קוֹל יְהוָה (the voice of Jehovah, ver. 8) is not the voice of God speaking or calling them, but the sound of God walking in the garden, as in II Sam. v.24, I Kings xiv. 6, etc.⁵

The classic interpretation is maintained by such modern commentators as Leupold who stated:

Yahweh God is represented as "walking about in the garden." The almost casual way in which this is remarked indicates that this did not occur for the first time just then. The assumption that God had repeatedly done this is quite feasible. Besides, there is extreme likelihood that the Almighty assumed some form analogous to the human form which was made in His image. Nor is there anything farfetched about the further supposition that previously our first parents had freely met with and conversed with their heavenly Father.⁶

This interpretation is the only one which does justice to the Hebrew grammar of the text. For example, it is significant that Moses wrote הַיּוֹם "the day" and not just "day." Leupold explains:

The article before "day" is the article of absolute familiarity (κ. s. 297a), for this phenomenon occurred daily.⁷

Why Such Natural Conversations?

The conversations between man and God recorded in the Bible are so natural in style and content because God had appeared in human form and talked with people like one man talks to another. This is why there is nothing *odd* about the conversations God had with Adam, Abraham, Noah, etc. They were talking to Someone whom they could see, hear, and converse with.

Sometimes we are directly told that someone had a conversation with a God-Man who could be seen and heard (Gen. 18:17-33). Sometimes we are not told this. But the easy going and natural character of the conversation reveals that people were not talking in the air to some invisible entity but to someone in front of them (Gen. 18:22).

The sad conversation recorded in Genesis 3:9-19 between God and fallen man assumes that they were directly conversing with each other because they could see and hear each other.

The same would hold true when God came to Cain and asked him, "Where is your brother?" (Gen. 4:9). This question throws us back to Genesis 3:9, where God asked Adam, "Where are you?" The literary parallel cannot be denied.

How else can we explain how Noah was instructed to build the ark? The conversations between Noah and God presuppose that he is talking with Someone who was standing before him (Gen. 6:13f). That this is the case will become self-evident as we examine a host of other passages.

Genesis 18:1-33

Gen. 18:1 Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day.

2 And when he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the earth,
3 and said, "My lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, please do not pass your servant by.

4 "Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree;

5 and I will bring a piece of bread, that you may refresh yourselves; after that you may go on, since you have visited your servant." And they said, "So do, as you have said."

6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead it, and make bread cakes."

7 Abraham also ran to the herd, and took a tender and choice calf, and gave it to the servant; and he hurried to prepare it.

8 And he took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed it before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate.

9 Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "Behold, in the tent."

10 And he said, "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him.

11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing.

- 12 And Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"
- 13 And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?'"
- 14 "Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son."
- 15 Sarah denied it however, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh."
- 16 Then the men rose up from there, and looked down toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off.
- 17 And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,
- 18 since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?"
- 19 "For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."
- 20 And the LORD said, "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave.
- 21 "I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know."
- 22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD.
- 23 And Abraham came near and said, "Wilt Thou indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?"
- 24 "Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt Thou indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it?"
- 25 "Far be it from Thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from Thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"
- 26 So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account."
- 27 And Abraham answered and said, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the LORD, although I am but dust and ashes.
- 28 "Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, wilt Thou destroy the whole city because of five?" And He said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there."

29 And he spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose forty are found there?" And He said, "I will not do it on account of the forty."

30 Then he said, "Oh may the LORD not be angry, and I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?" And He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there."

31 And he said, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord; suppose twenty are found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it on account of the twenty."

32 Then he said, "Oh may the LORD not be angry, and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it on account of the ten."

33 And as soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the LORD departed; and Abraham returned to his place.

When three men appeared out of nowhere, perhaps materializing out of thin air right before Abraham's eyes, he knew that they were not just a few strangers looking for a free lunch. Keil and Delitzsch comment:

When sitting, about mid-day, in the grove of Mamre, in front of his tent, Abraham looked up and unexpectedly saw three men standing at some distance from him (יָיַן above him, looking down upon him as he sat), viz. *Jehovah* (ver. 13) and *two angels* (xix.1); all three in human form.⁸

One of the men was Yahweh in human form and the other two are identified by Moses in Genesis 19:1 as שְׁנֵי מַלְאָכִים "*the two angels*." The Hebrew text clearly indicates that the two angels visiting Lot were the two "men" who accompanied Yahweh in their visit to Abraham. The three men are not the Trinity as some have claimed.⁹ Dean Alford comments:

The three men, as declared in ver. 22, were the human appearance of Jehovah accompanied by two angels.¹⁰

In verse 13, One of the three men was finally identified as the יְהוָה "*Yahweh*" who appeared in verse 1.¹¹ Notice that the third Man now speaks as the divine "I" and no angel could speak as such without committing blasphemy:

And Yahweh (יְהוָה) said to Abraham, . . . At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son."

Since the definite article appears with the word “angels,” it must refer to the two men who left while Abraham and Yahweh were still talking.¹² In verse 22, we are clearly told that the third Man who has been repeatedly identified as יְהוָה (Yahweh) was still talking with Abraham when the other two left¹³:

While Abraham was still standing before [Yahweh].
(Gen. 18:22)

וַאֲבָרְהָם עֹדְנוּ עִמָּר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה

In Genesis 18, “the form of Yahweh” was that of a man (v.2). Thus we have a person who is “God” and “man” at the same time. The conversation between Abraham and the Man called יְהוָה is natural and free flowing because they talked “mouth to mouth.”

The multi-personal nature of God becomes essential for our understanding of this passage. No one has seen the Father according to John 1:18. Thus, God the Father cannot be the One who is sitting with Abraham under the oak tree. It has to be some other member of the Godhead.

Two Yahwehs

The same holds true for Gen. 19:24:

The sun had risen over the earth when Lot came to Zoar. Then the LORD (יְהוָה) rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD (יְהוָה) out of heaven.

The only natural interpretation possible is that יְהוָה in human form standing on the earth rained fire from the יְהוָה who was in heaven. No other interpretation fits the context and grammar of the Hebrew text.

Wrestling with God

One of the clearest theophanies is when Jacob met God face to face in a wrestling match (Gen. 32:24-30):

Gen. 32:24 Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.

25 And when he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him.
 26 Then he said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."
 27 So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob."
 28 And he said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed."
 29 Then Jacob asked him and said, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there.
 30 So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved."

Just as Moses had a פֶּה אֶל-פֶּה "mouth to mouth" encounter with God, Jacob had a פָּנִים אֶל-פָּנִים "face to face" encounter with a God. His conclusion was straightforward: כִּי־רָאִיתִי אֱלֹהִים פָּנִים אֶל-פָּנִים "I have seen God face to face."

He not only saw the one true God of Israel, but actually wrestled with Him. Keil and Delitzsch comment:

God had met him in the form of a man: God in the angel, according to Hos. xii. 4,5, i.e., not in a created angel, but in the Angel of the Jehovah, the visible manifestation of the invisible God. Our history does not speak of Jehovah, or the Angel of the Jehovah, but of Elohim, for the purpose of bringing out the contrast between God and the creature.¹⁴

Unitarians usually attempt to make the man with whom Jacob wrestled less than true deity. They argue that Hosea 12:4 identifies the man as just a created angel who merely represented God and, thus, he was not really God *per se* But Hosea actually confirms the identification of the Man as God (Hosea 12:4-6):

Hosea 12:4 Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed; He wept and sought His favor. He found Him at Bethel, and there He spoke with us,
 5 Even the LORD, the God of hosts; The LORD is His name.
 6 Therefore, return to your God, observe kindness and justice, and wait for your God continually.

We are told that Jacob wrestled with אֱלֹהֵי מַלְאָךְ "the angel." According to the pronouns in the text, Jacob wrestled with this "angel" and sought His favor, i.e., blessing. The "angel" blessed him by changing Jacob's name to Israel. But what is the name of this "angel?" Who was he?

To answer this question one only has to follow the pronouns in the Hebrew and in the English text. In verse 4 we are told:

Yes, he (i.e., Jacob) wrestled with the angel and prevailed; he (i.e., Jacob) wept and sought his (i.e., the angel) favor. He (i.e., Jacob) found Him (i.e., the angel) at Bethel, And there He (i.e., the angel) spoke with us,

וַיִּשָּׂר אֱלֹהֵי מַלְאָךְ וַיְכַל בָּכָה וַיַּחְתֶּנֶן לוֹ בֵּית־אֵל
וַיִּמְצְאוּנוּ וַשֵּׁם יְדַבֵּר עִמָּנוּ:

There are only two persons present in this narrative: Jacob and the angel. At the end of this verse we are told that not only did this angel speak with Jacob, but he also spoke with us.

The grammar of the Hebrew text is clear that verse 5 is a continuation of the last sentence in verse 4 and not a new sentence with a new subject. The last sentence in verse 4 begins with וַשֵּׁם and thus the "waw" consecutive leaves no doubt on this point of grammar. This is noted in the English text by a ", " at the end of verse 4 to indicate that verse 5 is part of the sentence already in view:

And there He (i.e., the angel) spoke with us, even the LORD, the God of hosts; The LORD is His (i.e., the Angel) name.

The Angel's true identity is now revealed:

וַיְהִי הָאֱלֹהִי הַצִּבְאוֹת יְהוָה זָכְרוּ:

even Yahweh, the God of armies; Yahweh is His name.

Thus, the "Angel" was not a mere creature, but was "Yahweh, the God of armies." This is further strengthened by verse 6 which is an exhortation to Israel:

וְאַתָּה בָּאֱלֹהֶיךָ תָּשׁוּב חֶסֶד וּמִשְׁפָּט שָׁמַר וְקוּה

אל-אלהיך תמיד:

Therefore, return to your God, Observe kindness and justice,
And wait for your God continually.

The Hebrew grammar is quite clear that the One with whom Jacob wrestled is the One from whom Jacob sought favor and the One to whom Bethel was built. Hosea then explains in verse 4b-5 that this One was none other than Yahweh, the God of armies! Leupold explains:

Since the theophanies of the Old Testament regularly involve the Angel of the Lord, we need not be surprised that He who usually assumed angelic guise here assumes, as later in the Incarnation, human form.¹⁵

The absolute deity of the One with whom Jacob wrestled is not refuted by Hosea, but rather it is established beyond all doubt. The classic commentator Pusey points out

He then Who appeared to Jacob, and Who, in Jacob, spake to all the posterity of Jacob, was God. . . God Almighty thus, accustomed man to see the form of Man, and to know and believe that it was God. He it was, the Prophet explains, the Lord, i.e., the Self-existent, The unchangeable, Who was, is and is to come, Who Alone Is, and from whom are all things.¹⁶

The modern Lutheran commentator Laetsch concludes:

With tears of repentance, in humble faith he implored the Angel of the Lord, who fought with him in the form of a man, in whom he recognized his God. The speaker was not a tribal god, but Jehovah (cp. Exod. 3:15), the everlasting Lord of grace and truth and power, the Lord of hosts, Jehovah is His memorial.¹⁷

No Escape From the Grammar

The attempt to identify the Man with whom Jacob wrestled as anything less than God incarnate is impossible for several reasons.

First, in terms of the past history of Jacob, the God with whom he now wrestled had already appeared to him in a dream recorded in Genesis 28:12-22. In verse 13, we read:

And behold, [Yahweh] stood above it [i.e., the ladder] and said, "I am [Yahweh], the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants.

וַהֲנֵה יְהוָה נֹצֵב עָלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי
אֲבֹתֶיךָ אֲבִיךָ וְאֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
אַתָּה שֹׁכֵב עָלֶיהָ לְךָ אֶתְנֶנָּה וְלִזְרַעְךָ:

According to this passage, Jacob saw *יְהוָה נֹצֵב עָלָיו* "Yahweh standing above" the ladder (v.13). This "Yahweh" identified Himself as the "God" of his fathers. Since the word *נֹצֵב* "standing" is a participle, it means that Yahweh was physically standing above the ladder. The usage of this word elsewhere in Genesis supports this interpretation (ex. Gen. 18:2; 24:13,43; 45:1). Thus, it was the human form of Yahweh that Jacob saw standing above the ladder.

The attempt to turn the God with whom Jacob wrestled into anything less than true deity is foolish. Leupold explains:

This is the first theophany that Jacob experienced of a total of seven according to the following count: the second, 31:3, cf. 11-13; the third, 32:1,2; the fourth, 32:24-30; the fifth, 35:1; the sixth, 35:9-13; the seventh, 46:1-4.¹⁸

Second, in terms of the immediate context, Jacob was amazed that his life had not been taken from him because he had seen God (Gen. 32:30). While Jacob assumed that to see God meant death, where in the Bible is it ever said that to look upon a mere angel meant death? Nowhere! Thus, the God with whom he wrestled had to be the true God or why else did he fear for his life?

Third, the word *אֱלֹהִים* "God" in the text was never used of angels during the Patriarchal period. The word used for angels in Jacob's day was *מַלְאָכִים* (i.e., Gen. 19:1; 32:1) and not *אֱלֹהִים*. That it may have been used of angels in Ps. 8:5 many centuries later has no bearing on what it

meant in Jacob's day. Words must be interpreted in the context of the age in which they are used.

Fourth, when Jacob later commented on the night when he wrestled with the Man, he identified Him as God and not an angel. In Genesis 35:1-7, we read:

Gen. 35:1 Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and live there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau."

2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your garments;

3 and let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and has been with me wherever I have gone."

4 So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which they had, and the rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem.

5 As they journeyed, there was a great terror upon the cities which were around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.

6 So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him.

7 And he built an altar there, and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed Himself to him, when he fled from his brother.

Jacob's identification of the Man with whom he had wrestled as God cannot be denied. This is stated again in Gen. 35:9-15:

Gen 35:9 Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him.

10 And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." Thus He called him Israel.

11 God also said to him, "I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you.

12 "And the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you."

13 Then God went up from him in the place where He had spoken with him.

14 And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He had spoken with him, a pillar of stone, and he poured out a libation on it; he also poured oil on it.

15 So Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him, Bethel.

The Hebrew text clearly indicates that the same God-Man who wrestled with Jacob in Genesis 32:24-32 now appeared to Jacob in the same human form (Gen. 35:9-13). This God-Man identified Himself by saying, "I am God Almighty" (v. 11). Words cannot be clearer.

Notice also that God "went up" in Gen. 35:13:

Then God went up from him in the place where He had spoken with him.

וַיַּעַל מֵעָלָיו אֱלֹהִים בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר אֹתוֹ:

This verse indicates that God had "come down" in human form to have this conversation with Jacob. When He was finished speaking, He "went up" in front of Jacob just as He "went up" after talking with Abraham (Gen. 17:22). To dismiss such language by merely labeling it "anthropomorphic" and then hastening on to other issues is not the same thing as *proving* it is anthropomorphic.

The Elders Saw God

The next theophany is found in the second book of the Pentateuch:

Exod. 24:9 Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel,

10 and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself.

11 Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they beheld God, and they ate and drank.

12 Now the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction."

The text is quite straight forward. Seventy-four men saw the God of Israel standing before them in human form. The Hebrew is straightforward:

וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

v. 10 "they saw the God of Israel"

וַיַּחֲזוּ אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים

v. 11 "they stared at God"

The Septuagint reads:

καὶ εἶδον τὸν τόπον οὗ εἰστήκει ἐκεῖ ὁ θεὸς τοῦ
Ἰσραὴλ καὶ τὰ ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ

And they saw the place where the God of Israel stood, and
under His feet . . .

That the men saw God in human form is clear from the fact that in verse 10 this form had "feet" (Heb. רַגְלָיו and Gk. πόδας) and God was "standing" before them as opposed to "sitting" on the throne before them (cf. Isa. 6:1).

It is impossible to escape the fact that "The appearance which they saw had feet."¹⁹ And, if God had feet, then He had legs. And if He had legs, then He had a torso, etc.

This passage cannot be dismissed on the basis that it was a dream. What happened to these seventy-four men was not a dream because, (1) the men were not asleep and, (2) dreams are never group events. Throughout the Bible, only individuals had dreams (Gen. 20:3; 31:10; 37:5; Judg. 7:13; Dan. 2:3, etc.)

Neither can we dismiss this passage as a vision. The Biblical authors had no problem identifying when visions took place (Gen. 15:1; Num. 12:6; Ezek. 1:1, etc.).

We are told twice that these seventy-four men actually saw Yahweh in human form standing before them. In verse 10 we read:

וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And they saw the God of Israel.

The verb **וַיִּרְאוּ** "they saw" indicates that the leaders were actually *staring* at the God-Man in front of them.²⁰

Then in verse 11, we are again told:

וַיַּחֲזוּ אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים

And they saw God.

The verb **יַחֲזוּ** means to see with the eyes. Here it means to see "God in theophany."²¹

Since the God-Man standing before the leaders was identified as "the God of Israel" (v.10) and as "Yahweh" (v.12), nothing less than absolute deity is possible.²² This is why they were amazed that they were not struck dead for seeing God (v.11). They did not understand that, while to see God in His essential glory would mean instant death, to see God in the form of a Man did not mean death.²³

Exodus 33:18-33

This is probably a good place to deal with Exod. 33:18-23 which some have assumed is a flat denial of the possibility of theophanies:

Exod. 33:18 Then Moses said, "I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!"

19 And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

20 But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"

21 Then the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock;

22 and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by.

23 "Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."

This passage has been misunderstood and misapplied for centuries. In verse 18, Moses made a request:

הֲרֵאֵנִי נָא אֶת־כְּבוֹדְךָ:

"I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!"

When Moses requested "Show see your *glory*," he was not asking once again to see a visible form of Yahweh because he had already seen that (Num. 12:8). He wanted to see not the form, but the *essence* of God. But this is not possible for a creature. To behold the essential glory of God would bring instant death. Keil and Delitzsch comment:

What Moses desired to see, as the answer of God clearly shows, must have been something surpassing all former revelations of the glory of Jehovah (chap. xvi. 7,10, xxiv. 16,17), and even going beyond Jehovah's talking with him face to face, or mouth to mouth, he merely saw a "similitude of Jehovah" (Num. xii. 8), a form which rendered the invisible being of God visible to the human eye, i.e., a manifestation of the divine glory in a certain form, and not the direct or essential glory of Jehovah. . . What Moses desired, therefore, was a sight of the glory or essential being of God, without any figure, and without a veil.²⁴

The word "face" is used as a synonym for "glory" because the Jews at that time assumed that the essential character of someone could be seen in his face (Prov. 7:13; 21:29; Eccles. 8:1, etc.). God's glory is typically seen as the out-shining of His face (Ps. 31:16; 80:3,7,19, etc.).

What is often missed in this passage is that, while God said to Moses "you cannot see my face," He also said "you shall see my back." When God in all His glory is passing by, Moses was prevented from seeing it (vs. 21-22). But when His glory had passed by, then Moses was allowed to see God's "back."

The "Back" of God

What was God's "back" which Moses was allowed to see? It could not be a literal human "back" because God was not here in human form. Rawlinson commented:

Moses was allowed to see, not the full manifestation [of the glory of God], but the sort of after-glow which it left behind, which was as much as human nature could endure.²⁵

The German Commentator John Peter Lange agrees:

But then he may look after the glory that has passed, and see it on the back side in the lingering splendor of its effects.²⁶

Nowhere in the passage are we told that no one can see a form of Yahweh. But we are told that to see God in His quintessential Being as expressed in the out-shining of His Glory would mean instant death.

The Testimony of Isaiah

We now pass from the Law to the Prophets for our next theophany. Isaiah saw Adonai Yahweh sitting on a throne:

Isa. 6:1 In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.

2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

3 And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory."

4 And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.

5 Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

Notice that Isaiah does not say, "My mind or spirit has seen Yahweh," as if this sight were only an inward vision in his head. No, he explicitly states, **אֶת־הַמֶּלֶךְ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת רָאוּ עֵינִי** "the King, Yahweh of armies, my eyes have seen." (Lit. Heb. v.5)

Isaiah's statement of fact in verse 1, **וָאֵרָאָה אֶת־יְהוָה** "I saw the Lord," is not indicative of a vision or dream. His emphasis that he saw the Lord with his own "eyes" means that, to Isaiah, this was not an internal vision which took place only in his head, but it was a real external physical sight.

It was not Isaiah's mind or spirit which inwardly saw something that did not in fact exist, but, rather, it was Isaiah's eyes which saw an outward physical manifestation of Yahweh.²⁷

Obviously, in order for Isaiah to *see* Yahweh of armies sitting on His throne, Yahweh had to be visible to the human eye. The fact that He was seen "sitting," as opposed to "standing," implies that Isaiah saw a Man sitting on a throne and correctly identified Him as Yahweh (v.5). Calvin pointed out in his commentary on Isaiah:

It is asked, How could Isaiah see God who is a Spirit, (John iv. 24) and, therefore, cannot be seen with bodily eyes? Nay, more, since the understandings of men cannot rise to his boundless height, how can he be seen in a visible shape? But we ought to be aware that, when God exhibited himself to the view of the Fathers, he never appeared such as he actually is, but such as the capacity of men could receive. . . There was, therefore, exhibited to Isaiah such a form as enabled him, according to his capacity, to perceive the inconceivable majesty of God; and thus he attributes to God a throne, a robe, and bodily appearance.²⁸

That this is true is seen from the fact that Yahweh was described as wearing a glorious robe with a train that filled the temple (v.1). Keil and Delitzsch comment:

There the prophet sees the Sovereign Ruler, or, as we prefer to render the noun, which is formed from *adan=dun*, "The Lord of all" (All-herm, sovereign or absolute Lord), seated upon the throne, and in human form (Ezek. 1:2), as is proved by the robe with a train, whose flowing ends or borders (Fimbrice: *shulim*, as in Ex. xxviii. 33,34) filled the temple.²⁹

This is not just the interpretation of the older classic commentaries. The modern commentator E. J. Young states:

It is not the essence of God, which Isaiah sees, for, inasmuch as God is spiritual and invisible, that essence cannot be seen by the physical eye of the creature. At the same time it was a true seeing; a manifestation of the glory of God in human form, adapted to the capabilities of the finite creature, which the prophet beheld!³⁰

We must also point out that Isaiah feared for his life, not only because he was now conscious of his sinfulness, but also because he had seen "Yahweh of armies." (v.5) Thus it would be futile to attempt to make the Man seated on the throne anything less than absolute deity.

Verse 5 also refutes the Arian argument that only אֱלֹהִים "Elohim" and not יְהוָה "Yahweh" was ever seen in human form. Some Arians have argued that, since the word אֱלֹהִים could be used of a created being such as an angel, therefore, none of the theophanies were manifestations of true deity. But, in this passage, the אֲדֹנָי "Lord" of verse 1 is revealed to be יְהוָה in human form sitting on a throne. Not even the most ardent Arian would dare to say that יְהוָה is a name applied to angels or men. The Man on the throne was GOD, and not a god.

The Coming Shepherd King

In Isaiah 40:9-11, Isaiah envisioned a time when God would come to earth and publicly minister to His people:

Isa. 40:9 Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; Lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

10 Behold, the Lord GOD will come with might, with His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him.

11 Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs, and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.

In verse 9, we are told, הִנֵּה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם "Behold your God!" The word translated "Behold" is הִנֵּה which usually means to stop and look at something or someone wonderful.³¹ In verse 9 it modifies אֱלֹהִים (Elohim) and in verse 10 it modifies אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה (Lord Yahweh). It indicates that Isaiah looked forward to the time when Lord Yahweh would be on earth in human form and people would see with their own eyes that He is a compassionate Shepherd as well as a mighty Ruler and a righteous Judge. The early Christians rightly understood this theophany as referring to the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God, to earth.

Ezekiel's First Vision

Ezekiel had visions *of* God as well as *from* God (Ezek. 1:1). His first theophany occurred in connection with his call to be a prophet:

Ezek. 1:25 And there came a voice from above the expanse that was over their heads; whenever they stood still, they dropped their wings.

26 Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance of a man.

27 Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him.

28 As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.

2:1 Then He said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you!"

2 And as He spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard Him speaking to me.

3 Then He said to me, "Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day.

4 "And I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children; and you shall say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD."

The prophet Ezekiel had a vision in which he saw אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה "Lord Yahweh" (2:4) appear in the *likeness* of a Man sitting on a throne.³² He even described His "loins" as filled with fire.

But Ezekiel was very careful to avoid the idea that God is in His essence an exalted man. Thus he said that the Being whom he saw was כְּמִדָּתָא אָדָם "in the likeness of a man" and not a man *per se*. Regardless of what physical form God temporarily used in order to talk to people (i.e., fire, cloud, an angel, a man, etc.), God's essence is spiritual, and not corporeal (John 4:24).

The same is true of the angelic beings described in verse 5. They too “had the appearance of a man” while from Heb. 1:14 and Luke 24:39, we know that they are spiritual in essence, and not corporeal. Thus, while God (John 4:24) and the angels (Heb. 1:14) are spiritual, and not corporeal in nature, they have at times taken human form for revelatory purposes.¹³

The appearance of God to Ezekiel is reminiscent of Isaiah’s call recorded in Isaiah 6:1-13. Thus Isaiah’s pre-exile experience authenticated the post-exile call of Ezekiel.

Not a Male Deity

Since the Black Muslims and the Mormons both believe in multiple corporeal male deities, Calvin’s warning against the heretics of his day who taught such blasphemies, bears repeating:

For we know that heretics formerly disturbed the Church by their folly, who thought God to have a human form like ourselves, and also a throne on which he sits. Hence the Holy Spirit, that he may meet such comments, says, that the Prophet did not see a material throne, but only the likeness of one. But this is chiefly needful in mentioning the figure of a man: for this and similar passages, having been erroneously explained by those who assigned a human form to the Almighty, have given occasion to the error that God is corporeal and circumscribed within a defined space, and they proceeded to that pitch of fury, that they rushed in troops and wished to stone all those who opposed their impiety. The Prophet, therefore, says here, *that he saw, as it were, the likeness of a human appearance*. One noun ought to suffice, but because we are so prone to vague and erroneous opinions, he joins the word “appearance” to “likeness.” We see, then, that whatever the ancient heretics have fabricated about the visible form of God is excluded by the clearest language.¹⁴

A Theophany Is Not an Incarnation

Although the theophanies were “God of very God,” they were not “man of very man.” While true deity was the essence of a theophany, there was actually only an *apparent* humanness, not true humanness. We must not confuse a theophany with the Incarnation in which Christ was “man of

very man" as well as "God of very God." Thus, the true mystery of Christ is not His deity but His humanity.³⁵

The Arians always get it backward and assume that the deity of Christ is the big issue. However, given the theophanies of the Old Testament, the deity of Christ is no big deal. But that He was a real *man*, and not just a theophany with the appearance of a man, is the surprise that awaits us in the New Testament.

Ezekiel's Second Vision

There is a second possible theophany found in Ezek. 43:6-47:23. In this vision, a "man" appears to Ezekiel:

Then I heard one speaking to me from the house, while a man was standing beside me. (Ezek. 43:6)

A question immediately arises. Keil explains:

In vers. 6 and 7 the question arises, who it is who is speaking to the prophet; whether it is Jehovah, who had entered the temple, or the man who is standing by Ezekiel in the inner court?³⁶

The German commentator, Wilhelm Schroder, answered the question in the affirmative:

What the man says identifies him entirely with Jehovah, wherefore the reference by the article back to the man in ch. xl. is intentionally omitted. The man's speech, legitimating itself as word of Jehovah, shows him to be essentially the glory of the God of Israel. We have before us in the man the essential revelation of Jehovah's glory.³⁷

This interpretation would seem to be confirmed by the fact that this "man" takes Ezekiel on a tour during which he speaks to him. Keil explains:

Such passages as ch. xlv. 20 and 24 compared with vers. 19 and 21, and ch. xlvii. 6,8, compared with vers. 1 and 4, show

undeniably that the man who conducted the prophet also talked with him.³⁸

The identification of the “man” as God in human form is what we would expect after what Ezekiel saw in his first vision.

The Vision of Daniel

Another post-exile prophet who had a vision of God in human form is the prophet Daniel:

Dan 7:9 “I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, its wheels were a burning fire.

10 “A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, and the books were opened.

Who was this “Ancient of Days” who sits enthroned as Judge over all the earth? Why is He represented as an old man with white hair dressed in a white robe?

The title **יְעִתִּיק יוֹמִין** “Ancient of Days” is found only in the Book of Daniel and only three times in that book (7:9,13,22). He is no doubt the **אֵלִיָּא** (Most High) blasphemed in verse 15. Keil comments:

יְעִתִּיק יוֹמִין *one advanced in days, very old*, is not the Eternal; for although God is meant, yet Daniel does not see the everlasting God, but an old man, or a man of gray hairs, in whose majestic form God makes Himself visible (cf. I.26) . . . for God is not called the old God, but appears only as an old man, because age inspires veneration and conveys the impression of majesty. This impression is heightened by the robe with which He is covered, and the flames of fire which are seen to go forth from His throne. His robe is white as snow, and the hair of His head is white like pure wool; cf. Rev. I.14. Both are symbols of spotless purity and holiness.³⁹

This is the only vision of the Father recorded in the Bible. Since it was a “vision” in Daniel’s head, and not a physical sight before his eyes, this

does not contradict John 1:18. The vision goes on to describe someone who is called the “son of man:”

Dan. 7:13 “I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him.

14 “And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.

Both the “Ancient of Days” and the “Son of Man” are described in terms which indicate they are both God. For example, all mankind is called upon to “serve” the Son of Man (v.14):

Dan. 7:14 “And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him.

The word *שָׁרַף* “serve” means to *worship* in every place it is found in Daniel (Dan. 3:12,14,17,18, 28; 6:16, 20; 7:27). Thus, it clearly means that all men are called upon to serve the Son of Man in the sense of *worshipping* Him.⁴⁰ No mere creature can ever be worshipped no matter how exalted (Rev. 22:8-9).

The vision of the Son of Man is just as much a theophany as the vision of the Ancient of Days. The fact that He comes “with the clouds of heaven” is indicative of his divinity.⁴¹ Leupold explains:

First of all, it is significant that He appears “in the clouds of heaven.” Koeing (MW) lists the following passages where clouds appear as an indication of the presence of God: Exod. 13:21ff; 19:9ff; I Kings 8:10ff; Isa. 19:1; Jer. 4:13; Nah. 1:3; Ezek. 10:4; Ps. 18:10,12; 97:2-7; 104:3ff The clouds are the mark of both the heavenly and the *divine*.⁴²

Conclusion

The multi-personal nature of God is revealed not only in the grammar and syntax of the Hebrew text as illustrated in the last chapter, but also in the many theophanies recorded throughout the Old Testament period.

These appearances of God in human form are solid exegetical evidence that there are several Persons within the Godhead. This is the kind of material that Trinitarians expected to find in the Bible. Thus the theophanies are not a great surprise to them.

On the other hand, Unitarians, Muslims, Jews, and Arians are quite surprised to find so many clear theophanies recorded in the Old Testament because their belief systems cannot handle them. This is why some modern liberals dismiss them as remnants of polytheism. But that groundless theory is without exegetical merit.

The final piece of evidence which demonstrates the multi-personal nature of God is the absolute deity of the Angel of the Lord. This will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

Notes

1. Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, 568. The word is translated "likeness" in Exod. 20:4, meaning a physical form, i.e., idol. See also Deuteronomy 4:16.
2. Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 3:81-82.
3. R. Payne Smith, *Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 1:24.
4. Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, I :97.
5. Ibid.
6. Herbert Carl Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), 1:155.
7. Ibid., 156.
8. Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, I :228.
9. See Luther, 320; Ellicott, 73.
10. Henry Alford, *The Book of Genesis* (Minneapolis: Klock, 1979), 80.
11. Ibid., 81.
12. Leupold, 1:555.
13. Lange, 1:435.
14. Keil and Delitzsch, 1:304-305.
15. Leupold, 2:875.
16. Pusey, *Minor Prophets, Barnes' Notes*, 1:120.
17. Theophilus Laetsch, *The Minor Prophets* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1970), 96.
18. Leupold, 2:772.
19. Ellicott, 1:279.
20. BDB, 906f.

21. Ibid. 302.

22. See Alford, 332, and Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, II :159.

23. Some liberal theologians have argued that theophanies are impossible in the light of Deuteronomy 4:12 "you saw no form." Some apply it to Moses to contradict Numbers 12:8. But in Deuteronomy 4:12, Moses is addressing the nation and not himself (Deut. 4:1). Others apply it to the seventy-four men mentioned in Exodus 24:10. But Deuteronomy 4:12 is describing what happened when the entire nation was gathered at the foot of Mt. Horeb. Thus, there is no contradiction between Deuteronomy 4:12, Numbers 12:8 and Exodus 24:10. The location and the people involved are different each time.

24. Keil and Delitzsch, 2:236.

25. Ellicott, 1:316.

26. Lange, 1:140.

27. Some commentators assume that the entire episode was a fictional account created by some kind of inward religious trance. See Lange, *ibid.* Vol. 6, 104; Ellicott, 4:432. Alexander felt that it did not really matter because, to Isaiah, it was real: J.A. Alexander, *Commentary on Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 145.

28. Calvin's Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.) *Isaiah*, 1:200.

29. Keil and Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 1:190.

30. E.J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 1:235.

31. BDB, 243-244.

32. Keil and Delitzsch, *Ezekiel*, 1:44. "God appears upon the throne in human form, in the terrible glory of His holy majesty."

33. Ellicott, 5:207.

34. James A. Borland, *Christ in the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1978), 9f.

35. Calvin's Commentaries, *Ezekiel*, 1:96-97.

36. Keil and Delitzsch, *Ezekiel*, 2:277-278.
37. Lange, 7:407.
38. Keil and Delitzsch, *Ezekiel*, 2:278.
39. Keil and Delitzsch, *Daniel*, 230.
40. BDB, 1108.
41. See the discussion of the significance of the “clouds” in Keil and Delitzsch, E. J. Young, etc.
42. Herbert Carl Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1969), 308.

Chapter Nine

The Angel of the LORD

One of the most interesting theophanies of the Old Testament was the appearance of a "Man" who is called in the King James Version and other translations "The Angel of the LORD." This "Man" was actually a manifestation of God in human form in the role of a *messenger*. This may come as a surprise to many people today because their understanding of the word "angel" comes more from Medieval art than from the Bible.

Do Angels Have Wings and Halos?

Most people today assume that angels have wings and wear a halo around their head. It is also assumed that angels sit on clouds plucking harps and that there are women and baby angels. Some, like the Mormons, believe that human beings can become angels when they die. But none of these ideas are biblical. They come from a thousand years of Western art in which such things as wings were painted on angels, without any biblical support whatsoever.

While the seraphim had wings, angels were never described as having wings. When we hear of someone who claims to have died and gone to heaven and there saw angels with wings, harps, and halos, we know that their testimony is false. They have been reading too many comic books!

The word "angel" today conjures up so many unbiblical ideas that we will return to the original meaning of the term. We must de-mythologize the word "angel" from its many erroneous contemporary connotations.

Where the Mistake Was Made

The word מַלְאָךְ is the Hebrew word from which we get the word angel. It actually means "messenger" and not "angel" *per se*. Anyone who took a message to someone else is called a מַלְאָךְ in Hebrew. It is used in this sense hundreds of times in the Old Testament. Thus there was nothing mystical or magical about the word.

That this is the case is seen from the fact that it is translated "messenger" and not "angel" over a hundred times in the English Bible. It is also translated as "ambassador" four times. Here are a few examples:

Gen. 32:3 Then Jacob sent *messengers* before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

Num. 20:14 From Kadesh Moses then sent *messengers* to the king of Edom: "Thus your brother Israel has said, 'You know all the hardship that has befallen us.'"

Hag. 1:13 Then Haggai, the *messenger* of [Yahweh], spoke by the commission of [Yahweh] to the people saying, "I am with you," declares [Yahweh]."

From these and many other passages it is clear that the word מַלְאָךְ simply meant "messenger." There was nothing special, mysterious or religious about the meaning of the word. It was applied to men as well to heavenly beings.

If the word מַלְאָךְ simply meant "messenger," then where did we get the word "angel?" The mistake was made during the Middle Ages. The Greek word ἄγγελος was used in the Septuagint for מַלְאָךְ because it too meant messenger. It was a real and proper translation from Hebrew to Greek.

This is in contrast to the Latin Bible where the Greek word ἄγγελος is merely *transliterated* into Latin and becomes *angelus*. Thus, instead of translating the words and ἄγγελος as "messenger," the Latin Bible transliterated the Greek word ἄγγελος into the Latin word *angelus*.

This error was further compounded when the Latin Bible was translated into English. Instead of translating the Latin word *angelus* as "messengers," it was *transliterated* into the English word "angel." They did not translate it most of the time, but simply retained the Latin transliteration.

The Greek word ἄγγελος and the Latin word *angelus* were at times translated as "messenger" which shows that the translators of the English Bible knew what the word really meant. For example, we read in Matthew 11:10:

"This is the one about whom it is written, 'Behold, I send My messenger [ἄγγελος in the Greek and *angelum* in the Latin] before your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.'"

In this verse both ἄγγελος and *angelus* are properly translated as "messenger" and not "angel" because John the Baptist came with a *message* from God to give to man.

If the authors of the English Bible would have consistently translated the words מַלְאָךְ and ἄγγελος as "messenger," we would not be in the

mess we find ourselves in today. The word “angel” is now so loaded with misconceptions and ridiculous mental images that most people do not have a clue as to the biblical meaning of the term.¹

A Messenger — Not an Angel

This introduction should alleviate one common objection to understanding the “Angel of the LORD” as a theophany. When we say that God came to this world on different occasions in the Old Testament with a *message* for various individuals and hence was called a “messenger” (מַלְאָךְ in Hebrew), we are not saying that God put on wings, a halo, and ran around with a harp. God never became an “angel” in the popular sense of the word.

But there were times when God manifested Himself in human form and delivered a message to someone who then properly described Him as a מַלְאָךְ (messenger). The word מַלְאָךְ did not have all the conceptual baggage that it has today. Thus when the biblical authors identified a human Messenger as God, they were not talking about God being what we call today an “angel.” They meant “messenger” and not “angel.” For this reason, we will *translate* מַלְאָךְ and ἄγγελος as *messenger* instead of giving the transliteration “angel.”

Not an Ontological Term

This also means that when God came to earth in the form of a human Messenger, this did not lessen His deity in the least. God can speak to man in any way He chooses without compromising His divinity in the process. The word מַלְאָךְ and ἄγγελος are not ontological terms denoting what God *is*, but functional words denoting what God *does*.

This will once again underscore the multi-personal nature of God because Yahweh will be sending Yahweh to speak for Yahweh. The Yahweh on earth is a distinct Person from the Yahweh in heaven. But they both make up the one unified Yahweh. Lange explains:

While the Angel of Jehovah is Jehovah himself, it is remarkable, that in the very meaning of the name, as messenger, or one who is sent, there is implied a distinction of persons in the Godhead. There must be one who sends, whose message he bears. The phraseology indicates to us a certain inherent plurality within the essence of the one only God, of which we have had previous indications, ch. 1,26; iii. 22.²

When the Trinitarian picks up his Bible, he expects to find in its pages the idea or the concept of God becoming a Man. Thus, he is not surprised to find numerous theophanies in the Old Testament as a preparation for the Incarnation as recorded in the New Testament.

This is why the early Church had no difficulty understanding that the mysterious person called, "The Messenger of Yahweh" who appeared from time to time throughout the Old Testament was Jesus Christ appearing in human form before His Incarnation.

The Difference Between Being and Function

Those who reject the Trinity have always had a hard time with theophanies in general and the "Messenger of Yahweh" in particular because they falsely assume that the word "angel" has the ontological meaning of a created being.

Because they fail to understand the difference between "being" and "function," they assume that if God came to earth as a מַלְאָכִי or ἄγγελος, this would reduce God to being nothing more than a מַלְאָכִי or ἄγγελος. But then they have always failed to understand the difference between being and function.

While the Unitarian will assume that the "Messenger of Yahweh" was only a created being, i.e., an "angel," and hence not God at all, the Trinitarian assumes that the "Messenger of Yahweh" was actually Yahweh in human form delivering a message. It was, thus, one more theophany which prepared the way for the Incarnation. Which view is right? Only the evidence can decide who is right. We will now examine all those passages concerning the Messenger of Yahweh which identify who He was.

The Book of Genesis

The first explicit reference to the "Messenger of Yahweh" is found in Genesis 16:7-14. After Hagar had become pregnant by Abraham, Sarai, the wife of Abraham, became jealous and treated her harshly. So Hagar ran away into the desert:

Gen. 16:7 Now the angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.

8 And he said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from and where are you going?" And she said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai."

9 Then the angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority."

10 Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they shall be too many to count."

11 The angel of the LORD said to her further, "Behold, you are with child, and you shall bear a son; And you shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has given heed to your affliction.

12 "And he will be a wild donkey of a man, his hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand will be against him; And he will live to the east of all his brothers."

13 Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "Thou art a God who sees"; for she said, "Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?"

14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

First, it is obvious that she was talking to a Man who found her hiding at an oasis. There is nothing in the context to indicate that she was talking to the thin air.

Second, in verse 10, the Messenger states:

I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they shall be too many to count.

This Man spoke in terms of His doing something which only God could do. This promise must have reminded Hagar of the earlier promise made by Yahweh to Abraham in Genesis 15:5. The deity of the Man is clear. No mere creature can speak such words.

But then in verse 11, the Yahweh who is on earth speaks of another Yahweh in heaven who had compassion upon her:

Because Yahweh has given heed to your affliction.

כִּי־שָׁמַע יְהוָה אֶל־עֲנִיךָ:

The Unitarian may be tempted to say that verse 11 proves that the man talking to her was not Yahweh and, thus, we are not confronted with two Yahwehs. But in verse 13, Hagar leaves no doubt as to the identity of the Messenger who is talking with her.

In verse 13, Hagar calls upon the name of Yahweh. But is it the Yahweh referred to in verse 11, or the Yahweh who is standing there talking with her? Which Yahweh is it?

Then she blurted out the name of Yahweh, *the One who was talking to her*. (Lit. Heb)

וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמִיהָּוָה הַדֹּבֵר אֵלֶיהָ

The word is וַתִּקְרָא a waw consecutive imperfect and means that she blurted out the Divine name.³ The only reason why Moses identified the Yahweh whose name she blurted out as the "One who was talking to her" was to distinguish Him from the other Yahweh mentioned in verse 11.

This is proven to be true beyond all doubt by what she went on to say:

"You, God, see [me]." For she said, "Am I [still] here [alive] having looked upon the One who looked upon me?" (Lit. Heb.)

אַתָּה אֵל רָאִי כִי אָמַרְהָ הִנֵּם הִלֵּם רְאִיתִי אַחֲרַי רָאִי:

Hagar goes on to identify the Man who talked with her as אֵל "God." Even though the Hebrew text is awkward, she clearly expressed amazement that she is still alive after looking upon the God who had been looking at her. Hengstenberg comments:

Hagar must have been convinced that she had seen God without the mediation of a created angel; for, otherwise, she could not have wondered that her life was preserved.⁴

Keil also pointed out:

Believing that a man must die if he saw God (Exod. xx.19, xxxiii.20), Hagar was astonished that she had seen God and remained alive, and called Jehovah, who had spoken to her, "God of seeing," i.e., who allow Himself to be seen, because here, on the spot where this sight was granted to her, after seeing she still saw, i.e., remained alive.⁵

Hagar met a Man in an oasis in the middle of the desert and He knew who she was, where she came from, where she was going, that she was pregnant. He even predicted the future of her child not yet born. It did not take Hagar long to realize she was talking to God in the flesh.

Verse 14 reinforces the fact that she was talking to God; the oasis was named for the God who saw and talked with Hagar. Thus, it was God who came to Hagar in the form of a man with a message. This is why Moses

called Him the “Messenger.” He was not only “from” Yahweh, but He was also Yahweh in human form. Leupold comments:

The Angel of the Lord is not a created being but the Divine Being Himself; for 1. He explicitly identifies Himself with Yahweh on various occasions. 2. Those to whom He makes His presence known recognize Him as Divine. 3. The biblical authors call Him Yahweh. 4. The doctrine here implied of a plurality of persons in the Godhead is in complete accordance with earlier foreshadowing. 5. The organic unity of Scripture would be broken if it could be proved that the central point in the Old Testament revelation was a creature angel, while that of the New is the incarnation of the God-Man.⁶

The second reference to the “Messenger of Yahweh” has to do with Hagar once again:

Gen. 21:17 And God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, “What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.

וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת־קוֹל הַנֶּעֱר וַיִּקְרָא מֵאֲדָם אֱלֹהִים
אֶל־הָנָר מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מִהֲלֹךְ הָנָר אֶל־תִּירָאִי
כִּי־שָׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת־קוֹל הַנֶּעֱר בְּאֶשֶׁר הוּא־שָׁם:

18 “Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him by the hand; for I will make a great nation of him.”

19 Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink.

20 And God was with the lad, and he grew; and he lived in the wilderness, and became an archer.

Since in verse 17 we are told that God heard the lad crying, we would expect to read that God spoke to her. But the text does not say that. It says that the “Messenger of God” called to Hagar from the heavens. This has led some to think that Moses was actually saying that the Messenger heard the boy crying for He was the God who appeared to Hagar in Genesis 16.

This would seem to be the case from verse 21:18, where the Messenger speaks as only God can speak:

"I will make a great nation of him."

In verse 17, the general name אֱלֹהִים "God" is used instead of יְהוָה "Yahweh." This reveals that while God will take care of the boy, the boy is not part of the Yahweh's covenant with Abraham. Thus the text reads אֱלֹהִים instead of יְהוָה.⁷

Notice also that the Hebrew text of verse 11 does not say that the Messenger spoke to her from "Heaven," i.e., the invisible place where God's throne is established, but from הַשָּׁמַיִם "the heavens," meaning the visible sky above her. This indicates that the Messenger visibly appeared to her as the God-Man she had already met in chapter 16. Leupold comments:

Yet there is the likelihood that she saw the Angel of God, because He is the one through whom God specifically *manifests* Himself, the same one who in 16:7 under the name the Angel of the Yahweh had previously appeared to Hagar.⁸

How can we explain the fact that the "Messenger from God" is God? The only logical answer to this seeming contradiction is that God is multi-personal. Thus God can send God to deliver a message from God. This passage is exactly what Trinitarians expect to find in the Bible and what Unitarians do not expect to find.

Genesis 22:9-14

The next appearance of the Divine Messenger is found in Genesis 22:9-14:

Gen. 22:9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there, and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood.
10 And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

12 And he said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

13 Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.

14 And Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided."

This time it is Abraham and not Hagar who received a visit from the Messenger of Yahweh. And this time it saved the life of Isaac, just as the other visit had saved the life of Ishmael.

Notice that the Messenger appeared in the sky above Abraham. The Hebrew text does not say "Heaven" but שָׁמַיִם "the heavens," i.e., the sky, the place where you see the stars (v.17).

The failure to translate שָׁמַיִם accurately has led to the idea that an invisible voice rang out from Heaven's throne when in reality the Messenger visibly appeared in the sky above Abraham.

In verse 12, the Messenger of Yahweh said:

"Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I [i.e., the Messenger] know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me [i.e., the Messenger].

The use of the words "I" and "Me" show that the אֱלֹהִים "God" who spoke to Abraham in Genesis 22:1-2, giving him instructions about sacrificing Isaac, was the Messenger of Yahweh who now speaks to him again in verse 11. Nowhere in Scripture were sacrifices made to angels. On the contrary, the Bible warns us to have nothing to do with the worship of angels (Col. 2:18). Leupold comments:

As 16:7-11 and 21:17,18 already indicated, this person is Divine and specifically the one who later assumed the form of man. In our passage His Divine character is indicated by the words that close v.12: "thou hast not withheld thy only son from Me." That one can be God and yet so distinct from Him in one sense as to be able to say, "I know that thou fearest God," is to be explained on the ground of the distinction of Divine persons.⁹

It is clear that the Messenger of Yahweh is Yahweh. Verse 14 further proves this because Abraham calls the name of this place "Yahweh Provides." Which Yahweh? The Yahweh who had been talking to him. The Yahweh who delivered his son at the last moment and provided the ram instead.

The Divine Messenger appears in the sky again:

Gen. 22:15 Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven,
 16 and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son,
 17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.
 18 "And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Notice the change in Divine names. Instead of the אֱלֹהִים "God" mentioned in verses 1, 2, 3, etc., who is in reality the Divine Messenger who speaks in verse 12, we now read יְהוָה "Yahweh." Thus the Messenger of Yahweh who is Elohim quotes Yahweh. How can this be explained except by the fact that God is multi-personal?

The blessings uttered by Israel upon his death bed included a statement about the Messenger of Yahweh:

Gen. 48:15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,
 16 the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads;
 And may my name live on in them, and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

In this very moving death-bed scene, Israel gives a triple blessing to his children before he dies. In verses 14 and 15 he calls upon God to bless them. Then, in verse 16, he calls upon the "Messenger" to bless his boys. This is significant for several reasons.

First, the Messenger has to be Divine and not just a creature because God and the Messenger are called upon equally, to bless the boys. Keil comments:

This triple reference to God, in which the Angel who is placed on an equality with Ha-Elohim cannot possibly be a created angel, but must be the "Angel of God," i.e., God manifested in the form of the Angel of Jehovah.¹⁰

Second, nowhere in Scripture did anyone at any time pray to an angel to bless anyone. This is a father's parting prayer asking that God would bless his children. The Messenger mentioned in verse 16 is unquestionably Divine.

Third, Israel was no doubt referring to Genesis 32:22-30 where he met and wrestled with God in human form.¹¹ Dean Alford comments:

The Angel cannot be a created Angel, but in reff. the Angel of God's presence: the Messenger who spake with Divine authority and as himself Divine.¹²

Lastly, would it not be blasphemous for Israel to call a mere creature his Redeemer? It was God who redeemed him from all the evil he brought upon himself. The multi-personal nature of God is the only rational explanation for Israel's prayer.

The Book Of Exodus

The call of Moses came from the Messenger of Yahweh:

Exod. 3:1 Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

2 And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.

3 So Moses said, "I must turn aside now, and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up."

4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush, and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

5 Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

6 He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

7 And the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings.

8 "So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.

9 "And now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.

10 "Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt."

11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?"

12 And He said, "Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."

13 Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I shall say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?"

14 And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

15 And God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.

We quoted the entire passage in order to give the reader a feel for the dramatic conversation which took place between Moses and the Divine Messenger. Moses was called to deliver Israel when the "Messenger of Yahweh" appeared "in" a burning bush. Thus the fire is not the Messenger of Yahweh, but He is standing inside this fire. The conversation which follows reveals that this Messenger is Yahweh manifested in human form.

Notice that the terms "Messenger of Yahweh," "Yahweh," and "God" are used interchangeably throughout the dialogue. Keil explains:

The transition from the *Angel of the Jehovah* (ver. 2) to *Jehovah* (ver. 4) proves the identity of the two; and the interchange of Jehovah and Elohim, in ver. 4, precludes the idea of Jehovah being merely a national God.¹³

In verse 4, the fact that different names for God are used is significant:

When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush, and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי סָר לִרְאוֹת וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו אֱלֹהִים
מִחוּץ הַסֵּנֶה וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי:

The "Messenger" who is standing in the bush is now identified both as יהוה and אֱלֹהִים. The ancient Jewish Targums even insert the words "the Messenger of" before the word "Yahweh" in verse 4 because it is so clear that the Messenger who appeared in verse 2 is the Yahweh of verse 4 who saw Moses turn aside and who then spoke to Moses as the God who was standing in human form in the burning bush.¹⁴

This interpretation is further verified by a comparison of Exodus 3:2 with Exodus 4:5. In Exodus 3:2 we are told וַיֵּרָא מֶלֶאךָ יְהוָה "And the Messenger of Yahweh appeared." Then we are later told in Exodus 4:5 the true identity of the One who "appeared" to Moses:

"that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, *has appeared to you.*" (Exod. 4:5)

לְמַעַן יֵאֱמִינוּ כִּי־נִרְאָה אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתָם
אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב:

In Exodus 4:5 we are told the One who "appeared" to Moses was really יהוה אֱלֹהֵי "Yahweh God." The use of the same word נִרְאָה "appeared" in both passages, makes the identification of the Messenger as Yahweh inescapable. David Cooper comments:

This identification of the Angel of the Lord with the יהוה "Lord" and אֱלֹהִים "God" is confirmed by the fact that this Angel of the Lord in speaking of His appearance to Moses said, "that they may believe that יהוה Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee: (Ex. 4:5).¹⁵

This is further buttressed by verse 6, where Moses was afraid because he had *seen* God. How can Moses *see* God unless He has manifested Himself in some physical form? Indubitably, God was standing in human

form in the bush. This was later stated quite clearly in Numbers 12:8, where we are told that Moses *saw* "the form of Yahweh."

Exodus 23:20-21

Exod. 23:20 "Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.

21 "Be on your guard before him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since My name is in him.

This is one of the clearest passages in which the Divine nature of the Messenger is set forth. There are two things which mark out His divinity.

First, the Messenger can forgive sins. Verse 21 in the Hebrew reads:

הַשָּׁמַר מִפָּנָיו וּשְׁמַע בְּקוֹלוֹ אֶל־תִּמְרָ בּוֹ כִּי
לֹא יִשָּׂא לַפִּשְׁעֶיכֶם כִּי שְׁמִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ:

They are warned that, if they disobey, the Messenger **לֹא יִשָּׂא לַפִּשְׁעֶיכֶם** "will not pardon your transgression." The verb **לִפְשַׁעְכֶם** is in the imperfect and means to "take away, guilt, iniquity, transgression, etc., i.e., *forgive*."¹⁶

Who can forgive sin? God alone can do this. Thus this Messenger must be God. Keil comments:

This angel was not a created spirit, therefore, but the manifestation of Jehovah Himself, who went before them in the pillar of cloud and fire, to guide and to defend them (chap. xii. 21). But because it was Jehovah who was guiding His people in the person of the angel, He demanded unconditional obedience (ver. 21), and if they provoked Him (**תִּמְרָ** for **תִּמְרָ**, see chap. xiii. 18) by disobedience, He would not pardon their transgression; but if they followed Him and hearkened to His voice, He would be an enemy to their enemies, and an adversary to their adversaries (ver. 22).¹⁷

While the mere fact that this Messenger can forgive or not forgive sins is sufficient to reveal His Divine character, the text goes on to say **כִּי שְׁמִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ** "My Name is in Him." The significance of this statement cannot be avoided.

To the Jews at that time, the name of God was a revelation of His divine nature. As Ellicott correctly pointed out, "God and His name are almost convertible terms. He is never said to set His Name in a man."¹⁸ Hengstenberg said, "The name of God can dwell in him only, who is originally of the same nature with God."¹⁹ Dean Alford comments:

He is no created angel, but a form of the Divine Presence, bearing the name of Jehovah, as in ch. xiii.21, and clothed with His attributes, and indeed identified in action (ver. 22) with Him: for it is not said "*he* will be an enemy," &c., but "*I* will be," as equivalent: and (23) the way in which this will be shewn is by *his* going before thee, and *his* cutting off the nations.²⁰

The Divine Name יהוה was "in" the Messenger in the sense that what God was the Messenger was. Keil explains:

Jehovah revealed Himself in him; and hence he is called in chap. xxxiii. 15,16, the face of Jehovah, because the essential nature of Jehovah was manifested in him.²¹

In the Old Testament, the "name" of someone revealed his character. For example, the name "Jacob" meant "scoundrel" and so he was. Thus, the statement that God's "name" is in this Messenger can only mean that this Messenger has the character of God. That is why He is called both יהוה and אלהים.

The Book of Numbers

In Numbers 22:21-35, we find an amazing story of when the false prophet Balaam had an encounter with the Messenger of Yahweh:

Num. 22:21 So Balaam arose in the morning, and saddled his donkey, and went with the leaders of Moab.

22 But God was angry because he was going, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as an adversary against him. Now he was riding on his donkey and his two servants were with him.

23 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand, the donkey turned off from the way and went into the field; but Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back into the way.

- 24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path of the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side.
- 25 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pressed herself to the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall, so he struck her again.
- 26 And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn to the right hand or the left.
- 27 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam was angry and struck the donkey with his stick.
- 28 And the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?"
- 29 Then Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a mockery of me! If there had been a sword in my hand, I would have killed you by now."
- 30 And the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I ever been accustomed to do so to you?" And he said, "No."
- 31 Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground.
- 32 And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out as an adversary, because your way was contrary to me.
- 33 "But the donkey saw me and turned aside from me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, I would surely have killed you just now, and let her live."
- 34 And Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the way against me. Now then, if it is displeasing to you, I will turn back."
- 35 But the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but you shall speak only the word which I shall tell you." So Balaam went along with the leaders of Balak.

Throughout the text, the term "Messenger of Yahweh" is used interchangeably with "Yahweh." There is no distinction made when Yahweh is speaking as opposed to when the Messenger is speaking. It is Yahweh either way. We are thus once again dealing with a theophany. Keil states:

The visible manifestation of God was seen by the ass; but Balaam the seer was so blinded, that it was entirely hidden from his eye.²²

Once Balaam saw the form of Yahweh, he fell down before Him (v.31). If the Messenger were only an angel, He would not have received this act of worship (Rev. 22:8-9).

Notice carefully what the Messenger said in verse 35:

But the [Messenger] of [Yahweh] said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but you shall *speak only the word which I shall tell you.*" So Balaam went along with the leaders of Balak.

וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶאכֶךְ יְהוָה אֶל־בִּלְעָם לֵךְ עִם־הָאֲנָשִׁים
וְאָפֶס אֶת־הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר־אֲדַבֵּר אֵלֶיךָ אַתָּה תְּדַבֵּר וַיֵּלֶךְ
בִּלְעָם עִם־שְׂרֵי בָלָק:

Balaam is told by the Messenger to speak only what *He* tells him to speak. This must have reminded him of his earlier dream during which God came to him and told him the exact same thing:

And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "If the men have come to call you, rise up and go with them; *but only the word which I speak to you shall you do.*" (Num. 22:20)

The אֱלֹהִים who came to Balaam one night is now revealed to be the Divine Messenger who is standing before him. This is what Balaam later said concerning this point:

So Balaam said to Balak, "Behold, I have come now to you! Am I able to speak anything at all? *The word that God puts in my mouth, that shall I speak.*" (Num. 22:38)

In Balaam's mind, the Messenger of Yahweh and the God who came to him one night are one and the same person.

Some Unitarians have suggested that because the word אֱלֹהִים "God" is used in Numbers 22:20 and 39, the word only means a "mighty being" and not true deity. But Balaam repeats himself in Numbers 23:12, but this time he uses the Divine name יְהוָה "Yahweh" instead of אֱלֹהִים

And he answered and said, "Must I not be careful to *speak what Yahweh puts in my mouth?*"

The use of יהוה instead of אלהים is repeated in verse 26. Not even the most ardent Unitarian will reduce Yahweh to a created being.

When Balaam later reflected upon his experience of seeing the Messenger of Yahweh and falling down before Him, he stated that he had actually seen שדי "the Almighty" Himself:

And he took up his discourse and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, The oracle of him who hears the words of God, *Who sees the vision of the Almighty*, falling down, yet having his eyes uncovered." (Num. 24:3-4)

The Hebrew text in verse 4 is quite clear:

נֶאֱמַר שָׁמַע אֲמַדִּי־אֵל אֲשֶׁר מַחֲזֶה שְׂדֵי
יַחֲזֶה נָפֶל וְגַלְיֵי עֵינָיו:

Under the influence of the Spirit of God (v. 2), Balaam described himself as יַחֲזֶה שְׂדֵי מַחֲזֶה (lit. Heb. "seeing a sight of Shaddai"). The verb יַחֲזֶה is in the imperfect and means to see with the eyes.

The word מַחֲזֶה "sight" is the noun form of the same verb יַחֲזֶה. According to Brown, Driver and Briggs, it means that Balaam saw "God in theophany."²³ The same Hebrew words are repeated in verse 16. Thus he did not see a mere angel but the Almighty Himself.

The Book of Judges

In the book of Judges there are some startling instances where the Messenger of Yahweh is revealed as Divine. The first appearance of the Messenger is found in Judges 2:1-5:

Judg. 2:1 Now the angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you,
2 and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done?"

3 "Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall become as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you.'"

4 And it came about when the angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept.

5 So they named that place Bochim; and there they sacrificed to the LORD.

Notice first of all that the Messenger does not introduce His speech to the nation by a "Thus says Yahweh," which was the practice of the prophets mentioned in Judges 6:8. Instead, He speaks in terms of Himself. Keil comments:

Moreover, no prophet ever identifies himself so entirely with God as the angel of Jehovah does here. The prophets always distinguish between themselves and Jehovah, by introducing their words with the declaration "thus says Jehovah," as the prophet mentioned in chap. vi. 8 is said to have done.²⁴

Second, what He said is revelatory of His divinity. He speaks in the first person as the One who brought the people out of Egypt into the land which He had promised to give to their fathers. In Exodus 20:2 we read:

I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

A comparison of Exodus 20:2 and many other like passages with Judges 2:1 make the identification of the Messenger as anything less than Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, impossible.

A Possible Objection

Some Unitarians have argued that since the phrase "the messenger of Yahweh" is used of the prophet Haggai (Hag. 1:13), why can't Judges 2:1 be referring to some wandering prophet who spoke to the nation?

This interpretation is not possible because it takes a passage written many centuries later, long after Israel was no longer a theocracy, and interpolates it back into the time of the Judges. At no time during the period of the Judges were the prophets called "the messenger of Yahweh."

Thus, the historical context as well as the literary context is opposed to such an interpretation.

Some Jewish commentaries such as the Targums of Jonathan have inserted the words, "Thus says Yahweh" into the text of Judges 2:1. But those words are not in any Hebrew manuscript or in the Septuagint.

There is simply no way out of the obvious fact that the Messenger of Yahweh is Yahweh at the same time. This can only be understood in terms of the multi-personal nature of God. That this is so is evidenced by the reaction of the people to the Messenger's speech. The people wept and made a sacrifice to the Yahweh who spoke to them (vs. 4-5).

The identification of the Messenger as Yahweh is further verified as the passage unfolds:

Judg. 2:11: the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of [Yahweh]
12 they forsook [Yahweh], the God of their fathers, who had
brought them out of the land of Egypt
13 they forsook [Yahweh] and served Baal and the Ashtaroth
14 And the anger of [Yahweh] burned against Israel
20 So the anger of [Yahweh] burned against Israel, and He said,
"Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I
commanded their fathers, and has not listened to My voice."

The rest of the chapter is the sad story of how Israel rebelled against the Messenger of Yahweh who had warned them of certain judgment if they did not listen to His voice. The parallels between what the Messenger said in Judges 2:1-3 and what happened later in Judges 2:12-23 are too replete not to miss the connection.

Judges 6:11-22

Judg. 6:11 Then the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites.

12 And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior."

13 Then Gideon said to him, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian."

14 And the LORD looked at him and said, "Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?"

15 And he said to Him, "O LORD, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house."

16 But the LORD said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man."

17 So Gideon said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Thy sight, then show me a sign that it is Thou who speakest with me.

18 "Please do not depart from here, until I come back to Thee, and bring out my offering and lay it before Thee." And He said, "I will remain until you return."

19 Then Gideon went in and prepared a kid and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour; he put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, and brought them out to him under the oak, and presented them.

20 And the angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so.

21 Then the angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight.

22 When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the LORD, he said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face."

In verse 11 we read:

וַיָּבֹא מַלְאֲכֵי יְהוָה וַיֵּשֶׁב תַּחַת הָאֵלֶּה

And the Messenger of [Yahweh] came and sat down under the oak tree.

This could only be said if He had taken upon Himself the form of a man. In this case, he appeared as a traveler with a staff in his hand.

As He sat under the tree watching Gideon thrashing out some wheat, He revealed that He was sitting there by calling out a greeting to him, "Yahweh is with you, O mighty warrior" (v.12).

Gideon looked up and saw a man sitting under the tree and since he was not in a good mood, he gave a rude rebuff in verses 13-14. He addressed the man as "Sir," because as far as he knew, the man was just a stranger passing through.

Verse 14 is crucial to understanding this theophany. We will supply the words which make absolutely clear in English what is patent in the Hebrew:

וַיִּפֶּן אֵלָיו יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר לָךְ בְּכֹחֲךָ זֶה וְהוֹשַׁעְתָּ
אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכַּף מִדְיָן הֲלֹא שְׁלַחְתִּידָּ:

And Yahweh (who was sitting under the oak) turned (his head) in his direction and said to him, "Go in this your strength, and deliver Israel out of the hand of the Midian. Have I not sent you?"

The verb וַיִּפֶּן is a waw consecutive imperfect which means that the הָיָה "Yahweh" sitting under the tree "turned and look" at Gideon.²⁵ Thus, the stranger under the tree is clearly identified as Yahweh. In his classic commentary on Judges, Professor Paulus Cassel, explains:

The remark in ver. 14, וַיִּפֶּן "and Jehovah turned towards him," was doubtless intended to intimate that the heavenly visitant turned his face . . . full upon Gideon.²⁶

In other words, the Messenger of Yahweh who turned and looked at Gideon, was Himself Yahweh. Keil comments:

The writer very appropriately uses the name Jehovah here, instead of the angel of Jehovah; for by his reply the angel distinctly manifested himself as Jehovah, more especially in the closing words, "*Have not I sent thee?*"²⁷

Not only is the Messenger called יְהוָה "Yahweh" in verse 14, but He is worshipped as God by the sacrifice of food and wine (vs. 18-21) which Gideon provided. No mere angel would have received such sacrifices.

That this was Gideon's understanding is clear from verse 22:

When Gideon saw that he was the [Messenger] of [Yahweh], he said, "Alas, O Lord [Yahweh]! For now I have seen the [Messenger] of [Yahweh] face to face."

וַיֵּרָא גִדְעוֹן כִּי־מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה הוּא וַיֹּאמֶר גִּדְעוֹן
אֵלֶּה אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה כִּי־עַל־כֵּן רָאִיתִי מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה
פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים:

Once again, we are confronted with the fact that the Jews, during this period, believed that to look upon the face of God meant instant death. This is why Gideon cries out in fear lest his life be taken from him.

If this were the only passage in the Bible about the Messenger of Yahweh, it would be clear enough to establish beyond all doubt that the Messenger is Himself Yahweh. Thus, a heavenly Yahweh sent an earthly Yahweh to give a message to man. This is the kind of passage which delights the Trinitarians and aggravates the Unitarians because it reveals that the authors of the Bible believed that God was multi-personal. In this case, that there are several persons who are Yahweh at the same time.

A Woman Meets God

There is one more appearance of the Divine Messenger which merits our attention. In Judges 13:3, we are told of a woman who had a Divine visitor:

Then the Messenger of [Yahweh] appeared to the woman, and said to her, "Behold now, you are barren and have borne no *children*, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son.

According to verse 6 the wife of Manoah did not know what to make of the stranger who spoke to her. She wondered whether He could be the "Messenger of Yahweh" she had heard about or whether he were simply a mighty man of God. So, she played it safe:

Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A man of God came to me and his appearance was like the appearance of the Messenger of God, very awesome. And I did not ask him where he *came* from, nor did he tell me his name."

Manoah prayed to Yahweh to send the Man back to them to tell them how to raise the boy who was to be born to them (v.8). But when the Messenger appeared, his wife was the only one to see and hear this mysterious man (v.9). But she ran and got him to come at once and met the Man who had predicted the birth of her child:

So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, "Behold, the man who came the other day has appeared to me." Then Manoah arose and followed his wife, and when he came to the man he said to him, "Are you the man who spoke to the woman?" And he said, "I am." (Judg. 13:10-11)

The Man goes on to give them instructions about the dietary laws that are to be followed for the child. (vs. 12-14) Then Manoah invited the Man to stay and have a meal with them still thinking that He was only a man of God:

Then Manoah said to the [Messenger] of [Yahweh], "Please let us detain you so that we may prepare a kid for you." (v.15)

The response of the Messenger is instructive:

And the [Messenger] of [Yahweh] said to Manoah, "Though you detain me, I will not eat your food, but if you prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to the LORD." For *Manoah did not know that he was the Messenger of Yahweh.* (v.16)

The verse above reveals that Manoah did not know the true identity of the Messenger. Since He was a stranger, Manoah asked him some questions:

And Manoah said to the [Messenger] of [Yahweh], "What is your name, so that when your words come to pass, we may honor you?" (v.17)

The answer of the Messenger is far greater than Manoah could understand. The Messenger of Yahweh said to him:

לָמָּה זֶה תִּשְׁאַל לִשְׁמִי וְהוּא פֶּלְאִי:

"Why do you ask my name, seeing it is Wonderful?" (v.18)

The Hebrew text is quite enlightening on this verse. The Hebrew word translated “Wonderful” is פלאי. The prophecy of Isaiah 9:6 uses the same word פלאי as one of the titles of the Messiah. As Cassel pointed out, “The key to this whole narrative is contained in this word.”²⁸ Keil and Delitzsch comment:

It is to be understood in an absolute sense— “absolutely and supremely wonderful” (Seb. Schmidt) — as a predicate belonging to God alone.²⁹

The Messenger then receives the meal not as a simple repast, but as a burnt sacrifice made to Him. We will add the words in English which give the sense of the Hebrew text:

וַיִּקַּח מִנוֹחַ אֶת־נְדָרֵי הָעֲזִים וְאֶת־הַמִּנְחָה וַיַּעַל עַל־הַצֹּר
לַיהוָה וּמִפְּלֵא לַעֲשׂוֹת וּמִנוֹחַ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ רָאִים:

So Manoah took the kid with the grain offering and offered it on the rock to Yahweh [i.e., the One talking to you], and He [i.e., the Yahweh talking with him] performed wonders while Manoah and his wife looked on. (v.19)

The “rock” which was intended to be a table for a meal became an altar for sacrifice:

For it came about when the flame went up from the altar toward heaven, that the [Messenger] of [Yahweh] ascended in the flame of the altar. (v.20a)

The verse goes on to record the response of Manoah and his wife as they suddenly realize that they have been talking to *God* and not just a fellow human being:

When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground. (v.20b)

וּמִנוֹחַ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ רָאִים וַיִּפְּלוּ עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם אֲרָצָה:

They knelt down in worship before the Messenger because they now perceived Him to be God in human form:

Then Manoah knew that He was the Messenger of Yahweh. So Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God." (vs. 21-22)

וַיֹּאמֶר מְנוּחַ אֶל-אִשְׁתּוֹ מוֹת נָמוּת כִּי אֱלֹהִים רָאִינוּ:

Manoah exclaims that he and his wife had not seen just an angel but אֱלֹהִים "God!" The Hebrew is dramatic. Cassel comments:

We have seen God—*As seeing Him who is invisible*; by seeing a manifestation of Him in human form.³⁰

Some Unitarians have interpreted the word אֱלֹהִים as "mighty being," and not as "God," in the attempt to escape the conclusion that the Messenger was true deity. But, in the light of the use of the Divine name יְהוָה "Yahweh" in the next verse, it is clear that the אֱלֹהִים they saw was actually יְהוָה in human form:

But his wife said to him, "If [Yahweh] [i.e., the Man who talked with us] had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have let us hear things like this at this time." (v.23)

וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִשְׁתּוֹ לוֹ חֶפֶץ יְהוָה לֵהֲמִיתָנוּ
לֹא-לֶקַח מִיָּדֵנוּ עֹלָה וּמִנְחָה וְלֹא הִרְאָנוּ
אֶת-כָּל-אֱלֹה וְכַעַת לֹא הִשְׁמִיעֵנוּ כֹּזֵאת:

The passage is quite clear that the יְהוָה "Yahweh" who accepted the food from their hands, who showed them a miracle, and who promised them a child was the Man they had been talking to all along. The Messenger of Yahweh was none other than יְהוָה in human form.

Conclusion

If God is multi-personal, then we would expect to find places in the Bible where more than one person is identified as the one true God at the

same time. These distinct persons are not separate gods as the Mormons and other polytheists believe because there is but one, true, living, eternal Being who is God by nature and Maker of heaven and earth.

The evidence presented in the last three chapters demonstrates that the one true God is multi-personal by nature. Trinitarianism is thus the only theology which does justice to the grammar and syntax of the Hebrew text and to the historical and linguistic context of all the passages involved.

Notes

1. See: Robert Albert Morey, *Satan's Devices* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1993) for a discussion of the nature and work of angels.
2. BDB, 894f.
3. Lange, 1:416.
4. E.W. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1858), 1:109.
5. Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 1:221.
6. Leupold, *Genesis*, 1:500-501.
7. Keil and Delitzsch, 1:245; Ellicott, 1:84.
8. Leupold, *Genesis*, 2:607. It is surprising that Leupold failed to notice that the Hebrew says "heavens" and not "heaven."
9. Ibid., 629.
10. Keil and Delitzsch, 1:251.
11. Hengstenberg, 118.
12. Alford, 204.
13. Keil and Delitzsch, 1:439.
14. Alford, 228, the "angel of the Jehovah is very shortly shown to be God Himself. We have had examples of this, and shall have again." See also: Ellicott, 1:198.
15. David Cooper, 66.
16. BDB, 671.
17. Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 2:152.
18. Ellicott, 1:276.
19. Hengstenberg, 119.
20. Alford, 329.

21. Keil and Delitzsch, 2:152.
22. Ibid., 3:169.
23. BDB, 302.
24. Keil and Delitzsch, *Joshua, Judges Ruth*, 263.
25. BDB, 815.
26. Lange, *Judges*, 2:113.
27. Keil and Delitzsch, 332.
28. Lange, 190.
29. Keil and Delitzsch, p. 407.
30. Ellicott, *Judges*, 2:241.

Chapter Ten

God the Father

Given the principle of progressive revelation, Trinitarians assume that the triune nature of God is something which gradually became clearer with each new stage of Divine revelation, reaching its climax in the Incarnation and the New Testament. Thus, while they do not claim that the doctrine of the Trinity as formulated at Nicea can be found in the Old Testament, they do believe that the conceptual building blocks which led to the Nicene formulation will be found in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament.

We have already seen that the authors of the Old Testament clearly understood that there is only one, true, living, eternal Being who is God by nature and Maker of heaven and earth. And we have also seen that they understood that this one true God was multi-personal. These concepts are the two pillars upon which the entire doctrine of the Trinity rests and they are both clearly taught in the Old Testament.

A Simple Question

A simple question comes naturally to the mind. Since the Old Testament writers clearly depict God as multi-personal, did they give any indication as to who these Persons were? Did they give any indication as to the number and identity of the Persons making up the Godhead?

Since the earliest days of the Church, Christians have answered in the affirmative. There are clear indications in the Old Testament as to the number and identity of the Persons which make up the one true God.

What We Expect to Find

What must be in order for what is to be what it is? If the Old Testament reveals the identity of the Persons which make up the one, true God, then we would expect to find that they are given Divine names, titles and attributes and Divine works and worship are attributed to them. These are the kinds of things we would expect to find in the Old Testament, and decidedly what Unitarians do not expect to find.

God the Father

The doctrine of the Trinity begins with God the Father. If this doctrine is true, we will not be surprised to find references to Him in the Old Testament. And when we open the Bible, what do we find? The Old Testament does in fact refer to a "Father" in several places. Is this "Father" a "Person" or an impersonal force or power like electricity?

The Attributes of Personhood

But first, what do we mean by the word "person"? The average man or woman has no difficulty understanding that they are "persons" as opposed to being a rock or a tree stump which are non-persons. They also understand that they are "persons" in a unique sense that animals are not. This becomes quite clear when they communicate with each other.

A Personal God

It is in this common sense understanding of the word that we apply it to God. The Bible does not describe God as a non-person, but as a living Being who is conscious of His own existence and, thus, can say "I Am." God is also conscious of the universe around Him and of man in particular. He has emotions, intellect, and will and, thus, is not an emotionless, mindless, non-volitional "it." He can be prayed to because He can hear and respond. He speaks and enters into communication with man. The following chart contrasts "person" and "non-person":

Person	Non-Person
conscious of self	not conscious of self
conscious of others	not conscious of others
intellect	no intellect
emotions	no emotions
will	no will

Avoiding Hypocrisy

We must emphasize at this point that the very same evidence which establishes the personhood of God also establishes the individual personhood of each member of the Godhead. It would be the height of hypocrisy to accept the evidence as valid when applied to God in a generic sense and then turn around and reject it when it is applied to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit individually. Yet, as we will see in a later chapter, this is exactly what the Modalists do. They believe in a

“Personal” God on the basis of the very kind of evidence that, later on, they will reject when used to prove that each member of the Trinity is a distinct Person within the Godhead.

We must also point out that Unitarians believe that the Father is God on the very kind of evidence that they will later on reject as invalid when it is applied to the Son and to the Spirit! Any theology which successfully undercuts the basis of its own cherished beliefs is doomed to the dust bin of history.

The Personhood of the Father

If the Father is a true “Person” and not just an impersonal force or Divine energy, then we will expect to find in the Bible that the attributes of personhood, as given in the chart above, will be applied to Him.

Once we establish that the Father is a Person, then we must ask if He is true deity or only a created being like an angel. If He is true deity, then we should find Divine names, titles, attributes, works, and worship ascribed to Him.

Progressive Revelation

Since we begin with the hermeneutical principle of progressive revelation as an *a priori* truth, we assume that the references to the Father in the Old Testament will not have the depth of understanding that is found in the New Testament. The concept of God the Father was revealed in the earliest books of the Old Testament and slowly reached its full meaning in the New Testament. But its development from the bud to the flower does not negate its existence.

The pre-exile prophet Isaiah prayed:

Isa. 63:15 Look down from heaven, and see from Thy holy and glorious habitation; where are Thy zeal and Thy mighty deeds? The stirrings of Thy heart and Thy compassion are restrained toward me.

16 For Thou art our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not recognize us. Thou, O LORD, art our Father, our Redeemer from of old is Thy name.

כִּי־אַתָּה אָבִינוּ כִּי אֲבֹרָהֶם לֹא יִדְעֵנוּ וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא
יִכְיֶדְנוּ אַתָּה יְהוָה אָבִינוּ נִאֲלָנוּ מֵעוֹלָם שְׁמֶךָ:

In verse 16, Isaiah looked up to heaven and uttered a prayer in which he addressed Yahweh as אֲבִינוּ "Our Father." A parallel to this is found in the prayer of Jesus recorded in Matthew 6:9: "Our Father who art in heaven."

The personhood of the Father is clearly affirmed in this text. Isaiah prayed to אֲבִינוּ "our Father" because as a living Person He would be conscious of His own existence and of Isaiah's existence as well.

The "Father" who is addressed is expected to take notice of Isaiah's prayer and answer it. This "Father" must have emotions, intellect and will in order to hear and answer prayer. We are, thus, warranted in saying that the "Father" is a Person and not an impersonal force, power or energy.

The Deity of the Father

The true deity of the Father is also confirmed in this text by the fact that Divine names, titles, attributes, works and worship ascribed to Him. Isaiah would hardly be praying to an angel or an impersonal force.

In the next chapter, Isaiah once again prays:

But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father, we are the clay, and Thou our potter; And all of us are the work of Thy hand. (Isa. 64:8)

וְעַתָּה יְהוָה אֲבִינוּ אַתָּה אֲנַחְנוּ הַחֹמֶר וְאַתָּה יֹצְרֵנוּ
וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדְךָ כָּלֵנוּ:

The "Father" mentioned in the text is clearly a Person and not just a Divine power or energy. He is true deity because he is given Divine names and titles such as יְהוָה "Yahweh" and is described as the Creator of the universe and the Redeemer of His people. He is prayed to and worshipped. Thus the Father is God and not a created being.

Isaiah was merely putting into prayer what Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 32:6:

"Do you thus repay [Yahweh], O foolish and unwise people? *Is not He your Father* who has bought you? He has made you and established you."

הֲלִיְהוָה תִּגְמְלוּ־זֹאת עִם נָבִל וְלֹא חָכָם
הֲלֹא־הוּא אֲבִיךָ קִנֶּה הוּא־עָשָׂךְ וַיַּכְנִיךָ:

Moses calls the Father יהוה "Yahweh" and attributes the Exodus to Him. The Person who is called the "Father" has to be God.

The post-exile prophet Malachi quoted the Jews of his day saying:

"Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us?"
(Mal. 2:10)

הָלוֹא אֵב אֶחָד לְכָלֵנוּ הָלוֹא אֶחָד לְכָלֵנוּ בְּרָאֵנוּ
מִדּוּעַ נִבְנֶה אִישׁ בְּאָחִיו לְחַלֵּל בְּרִית אֲבֹתֵינוּ:

The text is a classic example of Hebrew parallelism in which an idea is repeated a second time but with different words. Thus the **אֶחָד לְכָלֵנוּ** "one father" in the first line is the same Person as the **אֶחָד לְכָלֵנוּ** "one God" in the second line. Pusey comments:

The one Father, (it appears from the parallel), is manifestly Almighty God, as the Jews said to our Lord, "We have one Father, even God."¹

Keil also points out:

The one father, whom all have, is neither Adam, the progenitor of all men, nor Abraham, the father of the Israelitish nation, but Jehovah, who calls Himself the Father of the nation in ch.i.6. God is the Father of Israel as its Creator; not, however, in the general sense in which He is Creator of all men, but in the more sacred sense, according to which He made Israel the people of His possession.²

In what sense and to whom was God a "Father"? God was the "Father" of the nation of Israel viewed as a whole in such places as Exodus 4:22-23.

Exod. 4:22 "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, 'Israel is My son, My first-born.
23 "So I said to you, 'Let My son go, that he may serve Me'; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your first-born."

God was clearly the "Father" of the nation of Israel viewed as a whole (Jer. 31:9). But He was also the "Father" of the Israelites viewed as individual "sons of God." Moses literally wrote in Deuteronomy 14:1:

Sons you are to Yahweh your God. (Lit. Heb.)

בְּנִים אַתֶּם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

Here Moses describes the Hebrews as the “sons of Yahweh” (לַיהוָה בְּנִים). This passage refutes the idea that the Hebrews did not view themselves individually as the sons of God. It is a common error to assume that the Fatherhood of God in the Old Testament had reference only to the nation as a whole and not to the individuals within that nation.

That people were individually viewed as the “sons” of God is also clear from Isaiah who wrote,

Isa. 1:2 Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; For the LORD speaks,
“Sons I have reared and brought up, but they have revolted
against Me.

3 “An ox knows its owner, And a donkey its master's manger, but
Israel does not know, My people do not understand.”

4 Alas, sinful nation, people weighed down with iniquity,
offspring of evildoers, sons who act corruptly! They have
abandoned the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel,
they have turned away from Him.

The prophet is chiding individuals within the nation for sinning against God as well as chiding the nation as a whole. Their sin is compounded by the fact that they are viewed as the “sons” of God.

Lastly, God is the “Father” of the Messiah, the Son of God. This is clear from Psalms 2:7, “Thou art my Son” and Proverbs 30:4, “what is His (i.e., God's) Son's name.” Since we will deal with these passages in the next chapter, no further comments will be given at this time.

Conclusion

In the Law and in the Prophets, God was addressed as “Father.” His description by the biblical authors indicates that He is a Person and not an impersonal force. He is also GOD because Divine names, titles, attributes, works and worship are ascribed to Him. Thus, the Trinitarian doctrine of God the Father is confirmed by the Old Testament.

Notes

1. Barnes' Notes, *Minor Prophets*, 2:481.
2. Keil and Delitzsch, *Minor Prophets*, 2:448.

Chapter Eleven

God The Son

The next Person in the doctrine of the Trinity is God the Son. Just as we found references in the Old Testament to the Father which revealed that He is a Person and is God, it will not surprise us if we find the same things true concerning the second member of the Holy Trinity.

The Personhood of the Son

The question of the personhood of the Son will be resolved on the basis of the same kind of evidence that proved the personhood of the Father. To deny the validity of this evidence when applied to the Son while accepting it when applied to the Father is self-refuting.

The Deity of the Son

If the Son is divine in the same way as the Father, then we would expect to find that the authors of the Old Testament give divine names, titles, and attributes to the Son. We also expect to find that He is described as doing divine works and that He is the object of divine worship. Thus, the deity of the Son will be based on exactly the same kind of evidence that demonstrates the deity of the Father. If we deny the validity of the evidence for the deity of the Son, then, we must logically denied the validity of the evidence for the deity of the Father. What is valid for the One is equally valid for the Other.

We point this out because Unitarians will accept the validity of such evidence as divine names and titles only when such things are used to prove the deity of the Father. But, when the exact same evidence is used to prove the deity of the Son, they will claim that it is not acceptable. The inconsistency of the Unitarians on this point is indicative of a lack of willingness to let the evidence lead you where it will.

Is the Son Mentioned?

Does the Old Testament speak of a Person who is called the "Son" of God? The prophet Agur answered this question in the affirmative in Proverbs 30:4:

Who has ascended into heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? *What is His name or His son's name? Surely you know!*

מִי עֲלֶה-שָׁמַיִם וַיֵּרֶד מִי אָסַף-רוּחַ בַּחֲפָזוֹ מִי
צָרַר-מַיִם בַּשָּׁמַלָה מִי הִקִּים כָּל-אַפְסֵי-אָרֶץ
מִה-שְׁמוֹ וּמִה-שֵׁם-בְנוֹ כִּי תִדְעַ:

First of all, it is clear that God is described not only as the Sovereign of the universe, but also as having a Son. This is so clear that no commentator, Jew or Christian, Trinitarian or Unitarian, denies this to be the case. Where they disagree is the identity of the "Son" of God.

Second, the Son is clearly a Person and not just a metaphor or an impersonal force or power.

Third, the parallelism in the Hebrew text reveals that what is true of the Father is equally true of His Son. Agur first asks, מִה-שְׁמוֹ "What is His [i.e., the Father's] name?" Then he asks, וּמִה-שֵׁם-בְנוֹ "And what is the name of His Son?"

Notice that Agur asks the same question twice: מִה-שֵׁם "What is the name of . . . ?" To lead the reader to the right answer, Agur then issues a rhetorical question: כִּי תִדְעַמָּה "Surely you know, don't you?" The obvious answer is, "No, I do not comprehend the nature of the Father or His Son."

The Father and the Son are both described as *incomprehensible* in their natures because in Hebrew idiom, to know the name of someone is to know their nature. But Agur declares that we *cannot* know the divine, inscrutable name of God *or His Son*. Thus, the deity of the Son of God is established in this text. He is just as incomprehensible as His divine Father.

Fourth, the Hebrew parallelism in the text also refutes the attempt to understand the Son as the nation of Israel or one of its earthly kings, which are never said to be incomprehensible. To deny the deity of the Son, in this text, would require one to deny the deity of the Father.

Fifth, Agur could not have uttered these words unless he understood the multi-personal nature of God. R. Payne Smith comments on this verse:

The concluding clauses of this energetic passage are rationally and easily interpreted, if we admit that the ancient Jews had some obscure ideas of a plurality in the divine nature.¹

Keil agrees that this is the underlying assumption of Agur:

But he would not have ventured this question if he had not supposed that God was not a monas [unity] who was without manifoldness in Himself.²

In the Psalms

This “Son” of God is mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament and He is clearly divine in His nature. For example, in his second Psalm, David said:

Ps. 2:1 Why are the nations in an uproar, and the peoples devising a vain thing?
2 The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed:
3 “Let us tear their fetters apart, and cast away their cords from us!”
4 He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them.
5 Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury:
6 “But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain.”
7 “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee.’
8 ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Thy possession.
9 ‘Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware.’”
10 Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth.
11 Worship the LORD with reverence, and rejoice with trembling.
12 [Kiss the Son], lest He become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

The מָשִׁיחַ “His Anointed One” mentioned in verse 2 is clearly the Messiah. The Septuagint reads, κατὰ τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ “and against His Christ.”

The ancient Jews and the early Christians were unanimous in this interpretation. As Princeton’s A. J. Alexander puts it:

The only subject, who can be assumed and carried through without absurdity, is the Messiah.³

Since King Messiah is addressed as בְּנִי "My Son" in verse 7, He is the "Son of God." In the next few verses the deity of the Son of God is revealed by His divine attributes and what He is given.

The One Who Breaks the Nations

The One to whom belongs all the nations of the world is God (Ps. 24:1-2). The One who will תִּרְעֶם "break" the nations is God (Job 34:24). The One who will תִּנְפֹצֵם "shatter" the nations is God (Jer. 51:19-23). All of these divine works are now applied to the Son of God.

The nations are told in verse 12 נִשְׁקוּ-בֶר "Kiss the Son." The verb נִשְׁקוּ always means "to kiss," i.e., pay homage.⁴ For example, in Psalms 85:10 we read:

Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have *kissed* each other.

חֶסֶד-וְאֱמֶת נִפְגְּשׁוּ צֶדֶק וְשָׁלוֹם נִשְׁקוּ:

Delitzsch comments, נִיחַ:

The Piel נִשְׁק means to kiss, and never anything else; and while בֶּר in Hebrew means purity and nothing more, and בֶּר as an adverb, *pure*, cannot be supported, nothing is more natural here, after Jahve has acknowledged His Anointed One as His Son, than that בֶּר (Pro. xxxi. 2, even בְּרִי = בְּנִי)—which has nothing strange about it when found in solemn discourse, and here helps one over the dissonance of בֶּן בֶּן—should, in a like absolute manner to חֶק, denote the unique son, and in fact the Son of God.⁵

In the 19th century, Unitarians attempted to replace "Kiss the Son" with "do homage to Him," i.e., Yahweh, in order to get rid of the Messianic reference. They argued this on the basis that the word "Son" is Aramaic and not Hebrew and it lacks the definite article. But as Moll pointed out:

The Aramaic בֶּר for בֶּן is also found, Pro. xxxi. 2, and the absence of the article suits entirely the Messianic inter-

pretation. The word then stands in the transition to a proper noun.⁶

The Revealing Pronouns

In terms of Hebrew grammar, the pronouns “He,” “His,” and “Him” in verse 12 must refer back to the word בֶּר “Son” in the first part of the verse:

Kiss the Son, lest He [i.e., the Son] become angry, and you perish *in* the way, for His [i.e., the Son's] wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him [i.e., the Son]!

The blessedness of taking refuge in the Son in order to escape His wrath is a clear indication of His true deity because God alone is our Savior (Isa. 45:22). That such language would be attributed to a mere creature would be blasphemous.

The force of this argument is verified by the desperate attempt of the 19th century Unitarians to jump over the word בֶּר “Son” and to go back to the word יְהוָה “Yahweh” in verse 11 and make it the referent for the pronouns in verse 12. This attempt is a clear violation of the rules of Hebrew grammar. But such desperate measures on their part reveal that they fully understand that, if the pronouns in verse 12 refer to the Son of God, then it is clear that He is true deity.

The Psalmist warns that, if the nations do not “kiss” the Son in submission and reverence, His anger will destroy them on the Day of His wrath. This is significant because the language used of the Son in speaking of His anger and wrath, is only used in the Psalms to speak of the anger and wrath of *God*. Thus a divine work is ascribed to the Son. For example, in Psalms 110, we read:

Ps. 110:5 The Lord is at Thy right hand; *He will shatter* kings in the day of *His* wrath.

6 *He will judge* among the nations, He will fill them with corpses, *He will shatter* the chief men over a broad country.

Trusting the Son

In Psalms 2:12, we are told:

אֲשֶׁרִי כָּל-חֹסֵי בּוֹ

“blessed are all those who are trusting in Him.” (literal Hebrew)

The verb **אֱמִינִים** “are trusting” is a participle and throughout the Psalms always means to put your personal faith and trust in *God* as your ultimate hope in this life and in the life to come.⁷ The use of this Hebrew verb in reference to the Son is very significant.

Every time, without a single exception, when the word **אֱמִינִים** is found in the Psalms, it means to put your personal faith and trust in *God*.⁸ It is *never* used to speak of trusting men or angels. It always has *God* as the focus of one’s ultimate faith and trust. Therefore, to “trust” the Son can only mean to trust Him as *God*.

As such, **אֱמִינִים** is an aspect of divine worship and is here given to the Son. Nowhere in the Bible are we ever told to place our ultimate faith, hope or love in men or angels. Once again, the Person called the “Son” of God is revealed to be true deity.

The Only Begotten Son

We are also introduced for the first time to the prophecy that the Messiah would be “begotten” by the Father at some future time. We are not told exactly *how* and *when* this will take place. The language itself does not imply that the Messiah is a created being as some Unitarians have suggested. Alexander correctly pointed out:

The essential meaning of the phrase *I have begotten thee* is simply, I am thy father. The antithesis is perfectly identical with that in 2 Sam. vii. 14, “I will be his father, and he shall be my son.”⁹

The Apostle Paul in Acts 13:33 interprets this verse as a reference to the coronation process initiated by the resurrection of Christ when He was “begotten” by the Father in the sense of giving Him life from the dead.

The resurrection of Christ was God the Father’s public declaration that Jesus was indeed His Son (Rom. 1:4). The process then led to the ascension and the session of Christ at the right hand of the Father in heaven where Jesus was crowned Lord of all (Acts 2:36; Phil. 2:5-11).

Beyond the New Testament’s inspired commentary on this verse, the great British preacher Charles Spurgeon warns us:

The dispute concerning the eternal filiation of our Lord betrays more of presumptuous curiosity than of reverent faith.

It is an attempt to explain where it is far better to adore. We could give rival expositions of this verse, but we forbear. The controversy is one of the most unprofitable which ever engaged the pens of theologians.¹⁰

The Messiah was not “begotten” as “the first act of Jehovah’s creation” as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and other Arians claim. The attempt to pretend that the word “begotten” means “created” is clearly contradicted by the New Testament’s inspired interpretation of the text. Jesus was “begotten” of the Father in space/time history when He was raised from the dead.

Isaiah the Prophet

From the Writings, we now turn to the Prophets for our next reference to the Son of God, the Messiah.

The Prophet Isaiah tells us of a Child who will be born who is identified as the Son who would be given by God:

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. (Isa. 9:6)

כִּי־יֵלֶד יֶלְדֵּנוּ בֶן נָתַן־לָנוּ וְחָתִי הַמְּשָׁכָה אָבִיעַר
עַל־שִׁכְמוֹ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ אֵל נְבוֹר שְׂרֵשְׁלוֹם:

Who is this “Son” who will born a Child? The ancient Jewish *Targum of Isaiah* inserts the word “Messiah” into the verse to make the identity of the “Son” clear to everyone:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; . . . and his name will be called the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, existing forever, “The Messiah in whose days peace shall increase upon us.”¹²

E. J. Young comments:

Hengstenberg points out that the Messiah early became known not only as the Son of David but also as the Son of God. “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (Ps. 2:7b), and the

designation of the Messiah as “mighty God” in this present passage should also be connected with the thought of the second Psalm.¹²

The “Son” in Isaiah 9:6 is the same “Son” referred to in Proverbs 30:4 and Psalms 2. He is the Messiah who would come to set His people free.

By way of Hebrew parallelism, we are told that the Child who will be born is also the Son who will be given. Thus, the Son is viewed in two different ways. On the one hand, as a Child He is born the son of David. On the other hand, as a Son He is given by the Father. This is the kind of language which led to the development of the doctrine of the two natures of Christ.

This Son is now given divine names and titles which reveal His absolute deity. The divine names and titles indicate that people will recognize His true identity. Young comments:

Who is this Child? In chapter 7 the mother named Him Immanuel. Here, the subject is impersonal and the verb will be rendered in English by the passive, “and his name will be called.” The thought is that the Child is worthy to bear these names, and that they are accurate descriptions and designations of His being and character. In the Bible the name indicates the character, essence or nature of a person or object. When, therefore, it is stated that He shall be called, we are to understand that the following names are descriptive of the Child and deserve to be borne by Him.¹³

We will now examine the divine names and titles in the order in which they are found in the Hebrew text. They are given in four couplets.

Wonderful Counselor

The Son is called פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ “Wonderful Counselor.” The first word is פֶּלֶא which we have already noted appears in Judges 13:17-18 as the name of the Messenger of Yahweh who appeared to Manoah and his wife¹⁴:

And Manoah said to the Messenger of Yahweh “*What is your name*, so that when your words come to pass, we may honor you?” But the Messenger of Yahweh said to him, “Why do you ask my name, seeing *it is Wonderful* (פֶּלֶא)?”

We have already pointed out in our discussion of that passage that the word **פֶּלֶא** means the wonderful incomprehensible nature of God. The fact that Isaiah now uses the divine title **פֶּלֶא** from the book of Judges, as a title for the Son, can only mean one thing — *The Son who is to be born is the same divine Person who appeared to Manoah and his wife as the Messenger of Yahweh.*

Since this is the same divine Person who repeatedly appeared in human form throughout the Old Testament, then all the other theophanies refer to Him. Thus, the Messenger of the Yahweh is the Son of God and not some other Person in the Godhead.

The significance of Isaiah's linking of the theophanies to the Son of God cannot be underestimated. When we get to the New Testament, we will see that its authors clearly believed that the Jesus of the New Testament was the Messenger of Yahweh of the Old Testament. When people saw God in the Old Testament, they were seeing the Son of God in a pre-incarnational appearance.

The God/Child

Isaiah's prophecy is remarkable because it concerns not a God/Man as in the older theophanies, but a God/Child who will be born on earth. That God in the future would come to earth as a child should not be anymore amazing than His coming to earth as an adult male.

The Virgin Shall Conceive

The reason that Isaiah could handle such a concept was that he himself saw Yahweh in human form sitting on a throne (Isa. 6:1-5). This definitive experience of Isaiah forms the context for all his prophetic visions of God coming to earth in human form. For example, after Isaiah sees Yahweh in chapter 6, in chapter 7 we read:

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and *she will call His name Immanuel.*" (Isa. 7:14)

לְכֵן יִתֵּן אֲדֹנָי הוּא לָכֶם אוֹת הַנָּה הָעֹלָמָה הָרָה
וַיֵּלֶד בֶּן וְקָרָאת שְׁמוֹ עִמָּנוּ אֵל:

The name of the Son shall be **אֱמָנוּ אֵל** and is translated in the Septuagint as **Εμμανουηλ**, which means “God with us.”

How are we to interpret this passage? However we interpret it, it must meet several important points:

1. The birth must be so unusual that it is a *sign*, i.e., a miracle. A normal birth will not do.
2. The child must be born to a young virgin girl and not to a married woman. The wife of the prophet or some other married woman will not do.
3. The child must be viewed by His mother as Immanuel, “God with us.” A normal baby will not do.

The name “Immanuel” naturally implies the deity of the Child. Dr. E. J. Young comments:

The very presence of the Child brings God to His people. Calvin rightly maintains that the name cannot be applied to anyone who is not God. No one else in the Old Testament bears this name.¹⁵

The only reason Unitarians refuse to interpret the word “Immanuel” to mean that “God is now with us in this Child” is that they have already decided on *a priori* grounds that the deity of the child is not possible. Thus, the failure to take the words of Scripture in their natural meaning is due to pre-conceived ideas of who and what God can and cannot be. Delitzsch faced the same prejudice in his day:

But the further question arises here, What constituted the extraordinary character of the fact here announced? It consisted in the fact that, according to ch. ix.5, Immanuel Himself was to be a **פֶּלֶא** (wonder or wonderful). He would be God in corporeal self-manifestation, and therefore a “wonder” as being a superhuman person. We should not venture to assert this if it went beyond the line of Old Testament revelation, but the prophet asserts it himself in ch. ix.5 (cf. ch. x.21): his words are as clear as possible; and we must not make them obscure, to favor any preconceived notions as to the development of history.¹⁶

The Messiah’s name is not only “Wonderful” but to this is added **יִצְחָק** “Counselor.” He is the One who gives wisdom to those who seek it. This

was interpreted by the ancient Jews as the divine Wisdom of God, the heavenly Logos.

The Mighty God

The Son is next called אֱלֹהִים נְבוֹרִים "Mighty God." The divine name אֱלֹהִים "El" is used of Yahweh on so many occasions that the attempt of some Unitarians to say that the use of this particular name means that the Son is less than true deity is ridiculous. This is obvious, particularly its use in Isaiah 45:22.

Even more to the point is the fact that the divine name אֱלֹהִים is always used by Isaiah as a name for God and is *never* used for created beings.¹⁷ Plumptre comments:

It is significant that the word for "God" is not Elohim, which may be used in a lower sense of those who are representatives of God, as in Exod. vii.2, xxii.28, I Sam. xxviii.13, but El, which is never used by Isaiah, or any other Old Testament writer, in any lower sense than that of absolute Deity, and which, we may note, had been specifically brought before the prophet's thought in the name Immanuel.¹⁸

The same is true of the argument that because there is no definite article before the word אֱלֹהִים, therefore it only means "a mighty god" and not "Mighty God." But Isaiah did not place a definite article before אֱלֹהִים נְבוֹרִים "Mighty God" in Isaiah 10:21 either.

Since Isaiah 10:21 clearly refers to Yahweh as אֱלֹהִים נְבוֹרִים without the definite article, who in their right mind would reduce Yahweh to "a mighty god"? If the absence of the article in Isaiah 9:6 means that the Son is less than true deity then the absence of the article in Isaiah 10:21 means that Yahweh is less than true deity as well.

Father of Eternal Life

The next divine title of the Son is אָבִי עוֹלָם. The word order is different in the Hebrew from the King James Version. In the Hebrew the word "Father" is first and then follows the word "eternal." How to translate these words is difficult. Some translations are:

"Father of futurity" Rotherham

"Father of the world to come" Knox

"Father of eternity" Hengstenberg, Plumptre, Young

“the Father of the age” Calvin
 “Eternal Father” Hengstenberg
 “The Giver of eternal life” Alexander

After a great deal of research on the many issues involved, we have translated אֱלֹהֵי as “Father of eternal life.” Calvin correctly pointed out, “The name *Father* is put for *Author*.”¹⁹

The word אָב “father” thus does not mean the One who *possesses* eternity but the One who *gives* it to others.²⁰ The word עֶלְמִי “eternal” is not the normal word for absolute eternity.²¹ Thus, we conclude that it means that the Son of God will be the Author of eternal life for those who believe in Him.

The Prince of Peace

The words שֶׁר־שָׁלוֹם “Prince of Peace” are quite straightforward and simply mean that the Son is the divine Ruler who will bring peace to this old world of sin and woe.

The description of His kingdom in verse 7 reveals the deity of this Prince. His kingdom is the fulfillment of all the covenants which were made to the Fathers. He shall sit on David’s throne ruling over a *universal* kingdom which is *eternal* and shall know no end.

He shall also fulfill all those prophecies in Isaiah which predict a new heavens and a new earth where the lion and the lamb will lie together and man shall go to war no more (Isa. 2:4; 11:1-9; 65:17-25). He is thus the great God of Peace as well as the Mighty God of war.

Conclusion

The Son of God revealed in the Old Testament is a Person and not an impersonal force. He is God and not a mere creature. This is the kind of biblical evidence which Trinitarians expected to find and which Unitarians cannot legitimately explain away.

Notes

1. Lange's Commentary, *Proverbs*, 5:248.
2. Keil and Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, 2:276. See also Charles Bridges, *An Exposition of Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 591-592.
3. Joseph Addison Alexander, *The Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 17.
4. BDB, p. 676.
5. Keil and Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, 1:98.
6. Lange's Commentary, 5:58.
7. Ibid., 340.
8. See Pss. 5:11; 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 17:7; 18:2,30; 26:20; 31:1,19, 34:8,22; 36:7; 37:40; 57:1; 61:4; 64:10; 71:1; 91:4; 118:8,9; 141:8; 144:2.
9. Joseph Addison Alexander, *The Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 16.
10. Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), 1:17.
11. *The Isaiah Targum* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1988), 21.
12. Young, 330.
13. Ibid., 331.
14. This is pointed out by commentators such as Hengstenberg, Delitzsch, Young, etc.
15. Young, 291. For an in-depth survey of liberal interpretations of Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6, see *Isaiah's Immanuel*, by Edward E. Hindson (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1978).
16. Keil and Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 1:220.
17. Ibid., 252.
18. Ellicott, 4:445.

19. Calvin, 311.

20. Keil and Delitzsch, 253.

21. See my discussion of this word in *Death and the Afterlife* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1983).

Chapter Twelve

God The Spirit

We were not surprised to find references to the Father and to the Son in the Old Testament because we believe that the doctrine of the Trinity is true. Thus, we expected to find such references. But the Unitarians are hard put to answer all these passages because they did not expect to find them in the Bible.

But what about the Holy Spirit? Is He also part of Old Testament theology and experience? If the doctrine of the Trinity is true, then we would expect to find references to the person and work of the Spirit in the Old Testament. And, when we open our Bible, what do we find? *There are actually more references to the Spirit in the Old Testament than all the references to the Father and the Son combined!*

The following chart gives us an overview of the Old Testament material on the Holy Spirit:

Terminology	Number of References
The Spirit of the LORD	24
The Spirit	15
The Spirit of God	12
His Spirit	5
Holy Spirit	3
Thy Spirit	<u>3</u>
TOTAL	62

The Personhood of the Spirit

It is amazing to us why anyone would deny the personhood of the Holy Spirit and reduce Him to an impersonal force or power. The reduction of the Spirit to the level of electricity is made purely on *a priori* grounds. When we ask for a passage in the Bible where the Spirit is defined as an impersonal force, we never get an answer.

The Bible talks about the Holy Spirit as a real Person. He is alive and not a dead, impersonal, force like electricity. He is real and not imaginary. Thus, the Spirit does things in the real world which only a Person can do.

The Biblical evidence that convinced us that the Father and the Son are Persons, is the exact same kind of evidence that demonstrates that the Spirit is a Person. Thus, to deny the evidence when we apply it to the Spirit, but to accept it when we apply it to the Father or to the Son is sheer hypocrisy as well as being self-refuting. If the evidence is valid for One, then it is valid for all Three.

Let us begin with those passages which reveal that the Holy Spirit is a Person before proceeding to demonstrate that He is God.

Isaiah 63:10-11

For example, the prophet Isaiah wrote:

But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; Therefore, He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them. (Isa. 63:10)

וְהִמָּה מָרוּ וְעִצְבוּ אֶת־רוּחַ קְדָשׁוֹ וַיִּהְיֶה לָהֶם
לְאוֹיֵב הוּא נִלְחָם־בָּם:

Then His people remembered the days of old, of Moses. Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock? Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them (Isa. 63:11)

First, Isaiah says that קְדָשׁוֹ רוח "His Holy Spirit" was וְעִצְבוּ "grieved to the point of being provoked." The word וְעִצְבוּ is a waw consecutive participle of עִצָּב and means to feel profound hurt, pain, and grief.¹

For example, the word עִצָּב was used to describe the inward pain felt by David when he heard that his son Absalom was dead (II Sam. 19:1-2). His weeping (v.1) reveals how deeply he felt the pain. It was even used of God in Genesis 6:6, where we are told, "He was grieved in His heart."

Secondly, only a Person can be grieved by מָרוּ "rebellion" against Him. Thus, the Holy Spirit is a Person and not an impersonal force. The well known Old Testament scholar Dr. E. J. Young comments:

The fact that Israel grieved the Spirit shows that the Spirit is a Person; how can one grieve an impersonal spirit? . . . The Spirit is here distinguished as a Person by the fact that He can be grieved and so feel grief.²

The Princeton Commentator J. A. Alexander rightly points out that the Spirit:

is then described as endued with personal susceptibilities and performing personal acts.³

The final proof is found in a comparison between verse nine where the “angel of His presence” is mentioned. Keil comments:

For just as the angel who is His face, i.e., the representation of His nature, is designated as a person both by His name and also by the redeeming activity ascribed to Him; so is the Spirit of holiness, by the fact that He can be grieved, and therefore feel grief.⁴

The Prophet Micah

We now turn to the testimony of the prophet Micah:

“Is it being said, O house of Jacob: ‘Is the Spirit of the LORD impatient? Are these His doings?’ Do not My words do good to the one walking uprightly?” (Micah 2:7)

הָאָמֹר בֵּית יַעֲקֹב הֲקָצַר רוּחַ יְהוָה אִם־אֵלֶּה
מַעֲלָלָיו הֲלֹא דְבָרִי יִטִּיבוּ עִם הַיָּשָׁר הוֹלֵךְ:

The word translated “impatient” is הֲקָצַר which is a qal perfect of the word קָצַר which means to be impatient.⁵ It is used in this sense in such places as Numbers 21:4; Judges 10:16; 16:16, etc. The question, “Is the Spirit of the LORD impatient?” reveals that the Jews believed that the Holy Spirit was a Person capable of becoming annoyed with the sin of man.

The Inspiration of the Spirit

That the Spirit manifests intellect, emotion and will is also clear from the fact that He communicates with man by speaking to him. He is the One who inspired the prophets and gave them the Word of God.

II Samuel 23:1

While there are many passages where the Spirit “came upon” the prophets and enabled them to prophesy (I Sam. 10:10; 19:20, 23, etc.), the Spirit was at times the One who spoke.

David testified on his death bed:

II Sam 23:1 Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse declares, and the man who was raised on high declares, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel,
2 "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue."

רוח יהוה דבר בי ומלתו על לשוני:

The personhood of the Spirit is as certain as the inspiration of the Psalms of David. Notice that it is the Spirit's word which is the word of God. Only a Person can speak the word of God. Only a self-conscious, living, person speaks.

I Kings 22:24

The speaking of the Spirit is also referred to in I Kings 22:24:

Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, "*How did the Spirit of Yahweh pass from me to speak to you?*"

Obviously, Zedekiah had no problem believing that the Spirit spoke to the prophets. Micaiah did not object to this concept, but only to the issue of whether the Spirit had spoken to him or to Zedekiah.

Nehemiah 9:30

Only a person can "testify" or "give witness." And this is what the Spirit did throughout Israel's history. In Nehemiah 9:30, we read:

However, Thou didst bear with them for many years, And *testified against them by Thy Spirit* through Thy prophets, Yet they would not give ear. Therefore Thou didst give them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.

ותמשך עליהם שנים רבות ותעד בם ברוחך
בִּיד־נְבִיאֶיךָ וְלֹא הִאֲזִינוּ וַתִּתֵּנָם בְּיַד עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ:

The word translated "testified against" is וְתַעֲדָה which is a waw consecutive imperfect and means to bear witness, testify, or protest against someone.⁶ It is used of God (Pss. 50:7; 81:8, etc.) as well as man (Gen. 43:3; Deut. 8:19, etc.). An impersonal force or power cannot bear witness, testify or protest anything.

Psalms 51:11

Another text that reveals the personhood of the Spirit is found in Psalms 51:11:

Do not cast me away from Thy presence, and do not take Thy *Holy Spirit* from me.

אֱלֹהֵי-תְשׁוּבָתִי מִלִּפְנֵיךָ יְיָ וְרוּחַ קֹדֶשְׁךָ אַל-תִּקַּח מִמֶּנִּי:

David asks that the "Holy Spirit" be not taken from him. Leupold comments:

One can scarcely escape the conclusion that this passage comes close to Isa. 63:10,11, where not a principle but a personal divine Spirit is under consideration.⁷

Dr. Plumer further points out:

No name of the third person of the Trinity is so often found in Scripture as that of the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of holiness. He is Spirit. He is Holy in his nature, and in his works. He is the author of holy Scripture and of all holiness in the heart of man. If he leaves us we are undone.⁸

Other evidence of the personhood of the Spirit is as follows:

1. The Spirit is the One who gives wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and artistic talents to men (Exod. 31:3; Isa. 11:20). He can hardly give to others what He Himself does not possess.
2. The Spirit instructs judges how to make wise decisions (Judg. 3:10). This is what a person does, not an impersonal force.
3. The Spirit motivates God's people to prayer and supplication (Zech. 12:10). Prayer requires a conscious mind. An impersonal force would be of no use for prayer.

With such overwhelming evidence, there is no way to escape the fact that the Spirit is a Person. But is He a divine Person like the Father and the Son or just a created being?

The Deity of the Spirit

If the Holy Spirit is divine in His Person just like the Father and the Son, then we would expect to find divine attributes and works applied to Him in the Old Testament. And this is what we find to be the case. For example, the Spirit is described as being *omnipresent* and, thus, is everywhere present at the same time.

Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence? (Ps. 139:7)

אֵלֶּה אֵלֶּךְ מִרוּחְךָ וְאֵנָּה מִפְּנֵיךְ אֲבָרָחָ:

The parallelism in the Hebrew text is quite clear that wherever God is present, the Spirit is present. Thus, we can no more escape from the Spirit than we can escape from God. They are both omnipresent.

In terms of the context of the entire Psalm, since the omnipresence of God is joined to the omniscience of God (v.6), this reveals that if One possesses one omni-attribute, He will possess them all. The Spirit is, thus, omniscient as well as omnipresent. His deity could not be made more emphatic.

As God, the Spirit does divine works. For example, according to Moses, the Spirit is the immediate Creator of the world. Like a bird hovering over the primordial waters, He formed the earth out of nothing (Gen. 1:2).

Like Moses, Job declared:

"The Spirit of God has made me." (Job 33:4)

The Spirit is also said to be the Author of Providence in which man and animals are brought forth:

Thou dost send forth Thy Spirit, they are created; And Thou dost renew the face of the ground. (Ps. 104:30)

תִּשְׁלַח רוּחְךָ יִבְרְאוּן וְתַחֲדָשׁ פְּנֵי אֲדָמָה:

While some Unitarians try to reduce the Spirit to the impersonal “breath” of God, Delitzsch rightly points out:

The spirit of life of every creature is the disposing of the divine Spirit, which hovered over the primordial waters and transformed the chaos into the cosmos.⁹

In his classic commentary on the Psalms, Professor Dickson says on this verse:

The same Spirit which created the world in the beginning, worketh yet powerfully in forming new creatures continually.¹⁰

The work of Providence is a work of God says Plumer. And this divine work is attributed to the power and wisdom of the Spirit:

Animal and spiritual existences are from God. None of them are self-originated. His Spirit from first to last has made air, earth and water to teem with life, Gen. 1:2; ii.7; Num. xvi.22; xxvii.16; Ecc. xii.7; Heb. xii.9. From year to year Jehovah renovates all nature.¹¹

Not only is the Holy Spirit the One who inspired the prophets of old and spoke the Word of God to them, He is also the Creator and Providential Ruler of the world.

The Words of God the Holy Spirit

Is it any wonder then that throughout the Old Testament, whatever the Spirit speaks is viewed as the words of God (I Sam. 10:10; II Sam. 23:2; Zech. 7:12)? *Whatever the Spirit says is what God says because He is God.*

Zechariah 12:10

“And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born.”

Lastly, how can the Holy Spirit be anything less than divine when we are told in Zechariah 12:10 that He is the Source of grace and prayers? The Hebrew text is quite emphatic that all prayers come from His motivation. Hence the word רִחֻם־רוּחִים is plural meaning *all* prayers:

רוּחִים־רוּחִים : רִחֻם : The Spirit of grace and prayers

The Holy Spirit is the Giver of grace and the Director of all true prayers.

Who is the Giver of grace?

For [Yahweh God] is a sun and shield; [Yahweh] *gives grace and glory*; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly. (Ps. 84:11)

Can an impersonal “it” be the Giver of grace? No! Can a mere “force” be the Director of all prayers? No! In order for the Holy Spirit to decide when, where, and to whom to give grace, He has to be omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. In other words, since He is “the Spirit of grace and of prayers,” He has to be **GOD**.

Conclusion

If we take the words of Scripture seriously, we can only come to one conclusion concerning the Holy Spirit. He is not an impersonal force or power but He is a Person. But He is not just a creature, but Almighty God. Thus the multi-personal nature of God includes the Holy Spirit as part of the Godhead.

Notes

1. BDB, 780.
2. Young, *Isaiah*, 482.
3. Alexander, *Isaiah*, 421.
4. Keil and Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 456.
5. BDB, 894.
6. BDB, 729.
7. Leupold, *The Psalms*, 405.
8. Plumer, 559.
9. Keil and Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, 3:135.
10. David Dickson, *Psalms* (London: Banner of Truth, 1965), 234.
11. Plumer, 926-927.

Chapter Thirteen

The Trinity In The Old Testament

So far in our study, we have found in the Old Testament the crucial concepts which form the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity. The one true God of Israel is tri-personal in nature and is identified as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

We have also seen that the personhood and divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit stand or fall together. If the personhood and divinity of one member is denied, then it must be denied for all. It is a classic case of all for one and one for all. The same arguments which led us to conclude that the Father is a person and not an impersonal force and that He is true deity also led us to the same conclusions about the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In this chapter, we will examine several passages in the Old Testament which reveal how the three members of the Trinity function together as One. The unity of the Trinity is revealed as they work together to accomplish common goals.

That we would find such passages in the Old Testament does not surprise us in the least. This is the sort of thing that Trinitarians expect to find. But Unitarians will be quite surprised because such passages do not fit in with their *a priori* assumptions. They have the impossible task of explaining away the obvious.

The Work of Creation

That God is the Maker of heaven and earth is so fundamental to the biblical vision of God that any attempt to tamper with this concept automatically self-destructs. The Being who created the universe out of nothing and made all things to work together for His glory, has to be omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. No finite creature has the wisdom, knowledge, and power to create *ex nihilo*. This is something that the Bible tells us that only God can do (Isa. 40:18-28).

That the Father is the Creator (i.e., Isa. 40:28) is not challenged by anyone, not even by the Unitarians. But that the Son and the Spirit are also identified in the Old Testament as the Creator of the universe will come as a surprise to some.

In the book of Isaiah, the “Servant of Yahweh” is the Messiah, the Son of God, as well as the nation of Israel (Isa. 42:1; 52:13-15, 53, etc.). In Isaiah 48:16, the Messiah says:

“Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, from the time it took place, I was there. And now the Lord [Yahweh] has sent Me, and His Spirit.”

קָרְבוּ אֵלַי שְׁמַעוּזֹאת לֹא מֵרֵאשׁ בְּסֵתֶר דִּבַּרְתִּי מֵעַתָּה
הִיחָתָה שָׁם אָנִי וְעַתָּה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה שְׁלַחְנִי וְרוּחוֹ:

In the context, who is the One speaking? The Speaker is identified in the preceding verses:

“Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called; I am He, I am the first, I am also the last. Surely My hand founded the earth, and My right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand together.” (Isa. 48:12,13)

If we interpret verse 16 in the light of its literary context, the Speaker is clearly the Creator of the world. The divine work of creation is, thus, attributed to the Messiah in this passage.

Then in the book of Job we read:

“The Spirit of God has made me, and the Spirit of the Almighty gives me life.” (Job 33:4)

רוּחַ־אֵל עָשָׂתַנִּי וְנִשְׁמַת שְׁדֵי תַחֲיִנִּי:

The parallelism in the Hebrew text is striking. The Holy Spirit is designated by two different words (רוּחַ and נִשְׁמַת); God is given two different names (אֵל and שְׁדֵי); and there are two different verbs used to designate the act of man’s creation (עָשָׂתַנִּי and תַחֲיִנִּי).

The verb עָשָׂתַנִּי “made me” refers to an act of divine creation.¹ It is the word used for the creative acts of God in Genesis 1:31; 2:2; 3:1; 5:1, etc. It is even translated “Maker” in Job 32:22. Job’s choice of this particular Hebrew word is significant because it clearly reveals that he understood in some sense the Spirit of God is God.

Genesis 1:2

Job is echoing Genesis 1:2, where the Spirit is introduced as the One who actually formed the earth:

And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֵהוֹ וְבָהוּ וְחָשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם
וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמָּיִם:

The word מְרַחֶפֶת “was moving” is a participle and means to hover over something.² It is used in Deuteronomy 32:11 to describe an eagle hovering over its young in the nest. It reveals that the Spirit of God was the One who superintended each new phase of the Creation.

The Triune Creator

We, thus, arrive at the situation where the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all identified as the Maker of heaven and earth. No wonder the author of Ecclesiastes said:

Remember also *your Creators* [lit. Heb.] in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, “I have no delight in them.” (Eccles. 12:1)

The Creation of the universe involved the joined effort of the three Persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Work of Redemption

Anyone who reads Isaiah 48:16 cannot escape the impression that the Sender is obviously the Father, and that the Son and the Spirit are the Ones who are sent:

“Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, from the time it took place, I was there. And now the Lord [Yahweh] has sent Me, and His Spirit.”

קָרְבוּ אֵלַי שְׁמַעְוֹזֹאת לֹא מֵרֹאשׁ בְּסִתֵּר דְּבַרְתִּי מֵעַתָּה
הִיחָה שֵׁם אֲנִי וְעַתָּה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה שְׁלַחְנִי וְרוּחִי:

Notice that all three members of the Godhead are present and accounted for. This is the kind of passage which led to the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity by the early Church. Given such passages, who can blame them?

Isaiah 61:1

The same situation occurs in Isaiah 61:1:

The Spirit of the Lord [Yahweh] is upon me, because [Yahweh] has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners.

The Servant of Yahweh, the Messiah, is sent by His Father to deliver the oppressed. In order to aid Him in His work of redemption, the Spirit of Yahweh is sent to empower Him. Notice once again that all three members of the Godhead are present and accounted for.

Isaiah 63:8-10

Isaiah goes on to give us yet another passage which models the Trinity. In Isaiah 63 we read:

Isa. 63:8 For He said, "Surely, they are My people, sons who will not deal falsely." So He became their Savior.

9 In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Messenger of His presence saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them; And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.

10 But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; Therefore, He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them.

There are three distinct persons in this passage. There is the Speaker who sent the Messenger. That makes two Persons. Then the Holy Spirit was grieved. That makes three Persons.

In the Hebrew text of verse 9, the words "the Messenger of His presence" (וּמַלְאָךְ פָּנָיו) literally translate as "the Messenger of His face."

It was an idiomatic expression which meant the Messenger who is His face, i.e., who is the outward expression of His essence. The classic German commentator Carl Wilhelm Nagelsbach explains:

For by "the angel of His face" who saved them, the suppliant evidently intends מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה by whom the redemption of the people from Egyptian slavery was effected. The expression מַלְאָךְ פָּנָיו refers immediately to Ex. xxxiii. 14, 15, where to the request of Moses that the LORD would let him know whom He intends to send with them (vers. 12, 13), the answer is given וַלֵּךְ פָּנָי. Moses thereupon rejoins: "If פָּנָי (thy Face) go not, carry us not up hence."³

Because Moses wanted to know whether God Himself would be with them, he asks whether God's "face" would be with them. The divine Messenger who appeared to Moses and the Patriarchs was the "face" of God. As Delitzsch rightly points out:

"the face of God" is His self-revealing presence. The genitive פָּנָיו, therefore, is not to be taken objectively in the sense of "the angel who sees His face," but as explanatory, "the angel who is His face, or in whom His face is manifested."⁴

This has been pointed out by modern commentators as well. E.J. Young comments:

This *angel* (the word means messenger) God had promised to send to His people (Ex. 23:20-23) and actually did send to them (Ex. 14:19; Num. 20:16). He is the Lord's angel (Ex. 33:14, 15) and is actually the Lord (Yahweh) Himself (Ex. 33:12).⁵

The "Messenger of His face" is clearly the "Messenger of Yahweh" who is Yahweh in human form. Who else could be described with such terminology? Even the pre-Christian Jews understood this quite clearly. Thus, the Septuagint renders Isaiah 63:9 as:

ἐκ πάσης θλίψεως οὐ πρέσβυς οὐδὲ ἄγγελος ἀλλ'
αὐτὸς κύριος ἔσωσεν αὐτοὺς διὰ τὸ ἀγαπᾶν
αὐτοὺς

... out of their affliction; not by an ambassador, or an angel but the Lord Himself saved them through His love.

The Alexandrian Jews in their paraphrase of this verse, pointed out that the "Messenger of His face" was not a human ambassador (πρέσβυς) or a mere created angel (ἄγγελος), but Yahweh Himself.

Since we have already exegeted the reference to the Holy Spirit in verse 10, suffice it to say that there is a clear reference to the third Person of the Trinity. We, thus, end up once again with a passage in which all three members of the Trinity are present and accounted for. As Nagelsbach pointed out:

the light of the relation of the Trinity breaks through even in the Old Testament ...⁶

Plumptre comments:

Here, and in Ps. li.11, as in the "Angel of the Presence," we may note a foreshadowing of the truth of the triune personality of the unity of the Godhead.⁷

Delitzsch is even stronger on this point:

Hence Jehovah, and the angel of His face, and the Spirit of His holiness, are distinguished as three persons ... we have here an unmistakable indication of the mystery of the triune nature of God the One, which was revealed in history in the New Testament work of redemption.⁸

Dr. E.J. Young, who wrote the foremost 20th century commentary on Isaiah states:

The Spirit is here distinguished as a Person by the fact that He can be grieved and so feel grief. Upon the basis of this passage Paul utters his remarkable statement: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph. 4:30). Thus, in these two verses there is a distinction of the three persons of the Triune God. He [Yahweh], the angel of His presence, and the Spirit of His holiness. In the history of the chosen people each Person of the Trinity was active.⁹

The prophet Isaiah should be remembered not only as the “fiery” prophet but also as the “Trinitarian” prophet.

Conclusion

The Old Testament reveals the Personhood, true deity, and unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in a way that is truly remarkable. The passages we have examined are exactly what we would expect to find if the Bible were written by Trinitarians. A Unitarian would have never written the Bible the way it is.

The only way to avoid this fact is to take the attitude, “Don’t confuse me with the facts. My mind is already made up!” But is it not better to bow before the God who tells us in Scripture who and what He is than to give our own vain speculations?

To the Law and to the Testimony! If they do not speak according to this Word, it is because they have no light. (Isa. 8:20)

Notes

1. BDB, 794.
2. Ibid., 934.
3. Lange's, 6:676.
4. Keil and Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 2:454-455.
5. Young, 481-482.
6. Lange, 677.
7. Ellicott, *Isaiah*, 4:568.
8. Ibid., 456.
9. Young, 482-483.

Part III

The Intertestamental Period

Chapter Fourteen

Between The Testaments

The only way to get from Malachi to Matthew is to travel through 400 years of Jewish history. This period of time has been designated by Christian scholars as the "intertestamental period" and the written materials from that period are called "intertestamental literature."

In its strictest sense, the term "intertestamental" would apply only to those Jewish writings that appeared *before* and *during* the life of Jesus. The Jewish writings which came *after* Jesus such as the Mishnah, Talmuds, etc. are usually referred to as "Rabbinic writings." But even this designation can be misleading because much of what is found in the "rabbinic" writings came from pre-Christian traditions. This "intertestamental" material cannot be ignored.

The "intertestamental" and "rabbinic" writings viewed together are representative of early Judaism. They supply us with the only written record of what the Jews actually believed about God and the Messiah before, during and after the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. They will either build a bridge linking the two Testaments together or create a wall separating them.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, liberal Protestants joined forces with Jewish scholars in declaring that Jesus was a simple Jew in belief and practice and, thus, the "Jesus" described in the New Testament was the mythological creation of the Apostle Paul who derived his concept of the divine Son of God from pagan religions. It subsequently became an unquestioned dogma among liberals that the New Testament's messianic interpretation of the Old Testament was *never* a part of Judaism before, during, or after Jesus.

This claim was first set forth in 1904 by Werde in his book *Paulus* and then later in *The Messianic Secret*. Then Bruckner in 1908 stated in *Der Strebe und Auferstehende Gottheiland* that Paul derived his christology from the Greek Mystery religions. This was repeated by Bousset in *Kyrious Christos* in 1913. It was later adopted by Bultman in his *Theology of the New Testament* (NY: Scribners, 1951), 1:33ff, and became one of the pillars of modern liberalism.

Conservative scholars have repeatedly pointed out the many errors in and insurmountable problems of the Werde-Bousset thesis. Dr. Gresham Machen, the best New Testament scholar of his day, in *The Origin of*

Paul's Religion (1925), gave a devastating refutation. The Dutch scholar Ridderbos, in his book *Paul and Jesus* (1958), presented a refutation based on European scholarship. Then in 1981, Seyoon Kim brought all the elements of the issue together in his masterful work, *The Origin of Pauls' Religion*.

Even though Werde and Bousset developed their theory before, and, thus, without the benefit of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other important Jewish literature, it has remained a pillar of modern liberalism. They argued, mainly from silence, that no early Jewish writings had been discovered in their day that spoke of the Messiah as the divine Son of God. Thus, Christianity was Gentile and pagan in origin instead of Jewish. Charlesworth comments on Werde's work:

In the light of our research it is seen to be full of numerous errors. . . . Werde was amazingly ignorant of Jewish sources, referring to the concept of a hidden Messiah by citing only Justin Martyr and the Gospel of John, and bypassing the classic references to this idea in such works as 4 Ezra. Nowhere does he refer to the messianology found in the Psalms of Solomon, 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch. It was unfortunately typical of his time for a New Testament scholar to study Greek thought and religion, and to ignore the detailed and fruitful research of such contemporaries as Kautzsch and Charles. . . . his work is sadly anti-Semitic or better anti-Jewish.¹

Despite the fact that Werde was ignorant of the early Jewish literature and, thus, his work was based more on fiction than fact, many modern day Jews, Muslims, secular humanists, and Protestant liberals are still using Werde's thesis as a weapon against the doctrine of the Trinity. They have argued that there is no historical or theological bridge between Malachi and Matthew because the messianic ideas found in the New Testament were never a part of early Judaism. It is assumed that the New Testament concepts of the triune nature of God and the deity of the Messiah are derived from pagan mystery religions.

One example of this liberal dogmatism is seen in the book *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* by the Jewish scholar Geza Vermes. His entire work is based on two *a priori* assumptions. First, he assumes that:

the religion of Jesus and Christianity are so basically different in form, purpose and orientation that it would be historically unsafe to derive the latter directly from the former and

attribute the changes to a straightforward doctrinal development.²

Vermes assumes that he can find the historical Jesus outside of the New Testament. But once you cast aside the New Testament, the only first century references to Jesus left are those found in the Mishnah and the Talmuds. But they viewed Jesus as a false Messiah and heretic who was thrown into hell. (See our appendix on the references to Jesus in the Mishnah and Talmud.) In other words, Vermes and those like him do not have a shred of evidence to back up their claims. It is nothing more than "smoke and mirrors" scholarship.

The so-called "Jesus Seminar" of the 1990's was another example of subjectivism and emotionalism taking the place of empirical evidence. Instead of basing their understanding of Jesus upon the first century documents that do exist, they speculated endlessly on the basis of a non-existing Q source and other liberal myths. We must agree with Moshe Bernstein of Yeshiva University (NY), who said:

I think we should talk about things that do exist as opposed to things that don't exist.³

In his second *a priori*, Vermes assumes the validity of the Werde-Bousset thesis that Paul developed Christianity from the mystery religions of his day:

Paul's powerful, brilliant and poetic imagination creates a magnificent drama, echoing the mystery cults of his age.⁴

Even in 1988, Irvine Zeitlin in his book *Jesus and The Judaism of His Time* naively assumed that Bultmann's restatement of the Werde-Bousset thesis was valid:

Jesus (Yeshu) was, of course, a Jew and not a Christian. Jesus was a fully human being and understood as such by the early church. Bultmann, again writes, "Not before the growth of legend on Hellenistic soil was the figure of Jesus assimilated to that of the "divine man."⁵

Of course, Zeitlin gives no primary source material to prove his assertions because *no* such material exists. It is just one more liberal myth.

We are, thus, confronted with the proposition that Jesus was only a simple Jew of his time and that Paul managed somehow to gain control of the entire Christian Church and turned it into a pagan temple. How and why he did this is never explained. Why the personal companions of Jesus never complained is never explained. Why Paul's writings were viewed as Scripture by the Apostles is never explained (II Pet. 3:15-16). And why the first century Jews never used this idea as an apologetic against Christianity is never explained either. As a matter of fact, this liberal dogma has no primary source material to support it and it cannot answer the many serious historical and methodological questions it raises.

Modern liberalism has yet to realize that its fundamental *a priori* assumption, that the New Testament does not reflect early Jewish beliefs before and during the life of Jesus, is erroneous as well as hopelessly outdated. The documentary evidence is overwhelming that the New Testament concept of the Messiah did not originate from Greek mystery religions or some other pagan system of thought. *Instead, it is clear that New Testament Christianity is Jewish.* The literature of early Judaism builds such a solid bridge from the Old Testament to the New Testament that even the most ardent anti-Christian liberal bigot cannot tear it down.

The naive assumption that the New Testament's understanding of the person and work of the Messiah was unknown to the Jews, but was something novel and new coming from foreign pagan sources, cannot withstand critical scholarship. Several observations make this abundantly clear.

First, if the Christians were inventing new messianic interpretations of various Old Testament texts as liberals claim, why didn't the Jews *object* that they had never interpreted those passages in that way? Why didn't they *reject* these messianic interpretations as new and novel?

Second, if the New Testament gave a new view of the Messiah that they had never heard of before, why didn't the Jews express *confusion* when Christians proclaimed Jesus as the divine Son of God? Where are the documents from the first century where the Jews complained to the Christians that they have never heard of the New Testament's messianic concepts?

Third, if the authors of the New Testament derived their ideas of the Messiah from pagan religions, thus, introducing these ideas into Jewish circles for the first time, why didn't they ever bother to *explain* these new ideas? Why did they *assume* that their Jewish readers already knew of, understood, and accepted the ideas of Messiahship that they were applying to the person and work of Jesus?

Fourth, why does the New Testament never explain to its readers the various messianic titles and names which it applied to Jesus? Could it be

that the messianic usage of such terms was neither new nor startling? Were not these terms already being used for the Messiah?

Fifth, why does the New Testament never defend its "messianic" interpretation of various texts in the Old Testament? Doesn't it stand to reason that they did not bother to establish that this or that Old Testament text was a reference to the Messiah because everyone already understood those texts in that way?

Since the Jews did not *complain* and the Christians did not *explain* the concepts of the Messiah that were being applied to Jesus, they must have held to common views. For example, nowhere in the documents do we ever find the Jews objecting to the idea of God having a Son or that the Messiah was the Son of God. Neither did they debate whether or not the Messiah would set up God's kingdom on earth. Thus, the issue which divided them was not the *existence* of the Messiah, but His *identity* as Jesus of Nazareth.

Matthew points out that the idea that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem according to Micah 5:2 was not a novel or new interpretation made up by Christians. The Jewish chief priests and scribes held to this opinion long before Jesus was born (Matt. 2:4-5). The issue was whether *Jesus* fulfilled that prophecy. The messianic character of the text *per se* was never called into question.

Millions of Jews have accepted Jesus as the Messiah because He fulfilled those messianic prophecies found in the Old Testament which foretold his death and resurrection:

And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. (Luke 24:25-27)

The appeal of the New Testament did not arise from the introduction of strange and foreign ideas from pagan sources, but from its constant appeal to the traditional Jewish messianic interpretation of the Old Testament. This is why they argued "as it is written" and "that it might be fulfilled" over and over again.

The apologetic of the early Church was powerful because it presented Jesus as the *fulfillment* of all the messianic prophecies, hopes, and longings of the Jewish people. The Christians pointed to the birth, life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus as the fulfillment of the description of the Messiah found in the Old Testament (I Cor. 15:3-4).

What must be in order for what is to be what it is? Since progressive understanding flows from progressive revelation, if the New Testament's understanding of the Old Testament is correct, then we would expect to find in early Jewish literature a growing awareness of the multi-personal nature of God and the divinity of the Messiah as the Son of God. We would expect to find that the Jewish literature before and during the life of Jesus supplied the authors of the New Testament with the messianic terminology, titles, names, prophecies, and conceptual framework within which they could argue that Jesus was the Messiah. This should be evident in the Jewish literature following Jesus as well.

On the other hand, if the typical liberal view is correct, then we would not expect to find the Jewish literature using the messianic imagery and prophecies that are found in the New Testament. After all, if Paul invented Christianity from pagan sources and his understanding of the person and work of Jesus the Christ comes more from Athens than Jerusalem, then we would not expect to find the Jewish literature supporting his messianic interpretation of various Old Testament texts.

Indeed, the entire liberal hermeneutic is built upon the assumption of a Gentile and pagan origin for the New Testament's messianic interpretation of the Old Testament. But if the New Testament, and the apostle Paul in particular, is found to be *Jewish* instead of Gentile and *rabbinic* instead of pagan, one of the main pillars of liberal theology is overturned.

We are not saying that these Jewish works are inspired. No. They were never a part of the Jewish or Christian canon of Scripture. The New Testament never quotes them as its religious authority for the Messiahship of Jesus. They quoted the Old Testament because it alone was the Word of God.

The importance of the ancient Jewish writings lies in their historical worth. They give us the Jewish context of the early Church before, during and after Jesus and, thus, supply us with the knowledge of why the New Testament was written the way that it was. This is why the original King James Version included the Apocrypha.

What do we find when we examine the Septuagint, the Targums, the Midrash, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Pseudepigraphy, the Mishnah, and the Talmuds? Do they provide us with a historical bridge that links the two Testaments together or do we find a wall that separates them? Do we find what a Trinitarian expects to find or what an anti-Trinitarian expects to find? Whose views are verified by these ancient Jewish documents?

Ancient Jewish Translations

After the Babylonian Captivity, many Jews could no longer understand the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. This problem led to two ancient translations, the Greek Septuagint and the Aramaic Targums.

The Septuagint

The Hebrew Bible was first translated by Alexandrian Jews into Greek around 200 B.C. It is called the "Septuagint" in honor of the seventy Jews who translated it. The authors of the Greek New Testament frequently quoted from the Septuagint instead of the Hebrew text and it soon became the Old Testament text of the Early Church.

The Septuagint translated the Hebrew word מָשִׁיחַ "Messiah" as χριστός "Christ" in such places as Psalms 2:2 and Daniel 9:26. The use of the word "Christ" set the precedent for all the Jewish literature which came after the Septuagint. It means "Anointed One."

The English word "Messiah" is not a translation, but a transliteration of the Hebrew letters in the word מָשִׁיחַ. If it had been translated it would read "Anointed One."

The English word "Christ" is not a translation either. It is a transliteration from the Latin word *Christi* which was itself a transliteration of the Greek word χριστός.

Jerome had the habit of taking Greek words and transliterating them into Latin instead of translating them. This error was then compounded by the English translators who transliterated the Latin into English. Such words as "angel," "baptism," "Messiah," and "Christ" are clearly misnomers. But we are stuck with them for better or worse.

The New Testament's use of the Septuagint determined its concept of the Messiah in many ways. For example, when the Alexandrian Jews translated Isaiah 7:14 from the Hebrew to the Greek, they wrote:

ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν
καὶ καλέσει τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Εμμανουήλ

This is what is quoted in Matthew 1:21. The preciseness of the Greek word παρθένος "virgin" overcomes any vagueness in the Hebrew text. The "young woman" in question was a virgin and not a married woman. Thus, the idea of the Messiah coming through a virgin's womb came from Isaiah 7:14 and not from some pagan religion.

The Septuagint at times paraphrases the Hebrew instead of translating it. On some of these occasions, it is clear that the translators emphasized that the text was speaking of King Messiah who was to come. One such passage is Isaiah 52:13–53:12, which speaks of the “servant of the Yahweh” suffering and dying for our sins.

Modern scholars have pointed out that the vocabulary and grammar of Isaiah 52:13–53:12 in the Septuagint clearly indicate that its translators interpreted this passage as a reference to a coming Messiah who would suffer and die for the sins of the people of God.⁶

Other passages that have a clear messianic interpretation in the Septuagint text include Genesis 49:10, Numbers 24:17, Psalms 2, Micah 5:2, etc.⁷

The authors of the New Testament followed the Septuagint in its messianic understanding of these classic Old Testament texts. If the New Testament is “pagan,” then so is the Septuagint.

The Targums

The second ancient Jewish translation is called the Targums or the Aramaic Bible. It is actually more a paraphrase than a translation. It is now available to the English reader for the first time.⁸

The Jewish scholar Samson Levey pointed out that the Jews who translated the Targums never had the slightest doubts about their messianic interpretation of the Hebrew Bible.⁹ The Targumists inserted references to the person, work, sinlessness, names, titles, kingdom, suffering and death of the Messiah into the text of Scripture without any hesitation whatsoever. For example, there are 32 passages in Targum Jonathan which have a clear messianic interpretation.

It is no longer questioned that the Targums contain much pre-Christian material. The post-Christian interpolations are insertions in a basic pre-Christian text. Christian scholars are just beginning to recognize the importance of targumic studies for the historical context of the New Testament itself.

Since a full discussion of the Targums is far beyond the scope of this chapter, we can only give a few examples of the Old Testament texts which the Targums view as messianic and which were formative for New Testament christology. We will first give the text from the Hebrew Bible and then the Targum on that text will be presented.

Genesis 3:15

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.”

This prophecy will be fulfilled according to:

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: “in the days of King Messiah”

The Fragmentary Targum: “in the days of King Messiah”

Targum Neofiti I: “in the day of King Messiah”

Genesis 49:10-12

“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. He ties his foal to the vine, and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine; He washes his garments in wine, and his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are dull from wine, and his teeth white from milk.”

Targum Onkelos: “until the Messiah comes, to whom the kingdom belongs, and whom nations [i.e., Gentiles] shall obey.”

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: “Kings and rulers shall not cease from those of the house of Judah, nor scribes teaching the Law, from his descendants, until the time the King Messiah comes, the youngest of his sons, because of whom the people will pine away. How beautiful is the King Messiah who is to arise from among those of the house of Judah. . . . How beautiful are the eyes of the King Messiah.”

Targum Neofiti I: “until the time King Messiah shall come, to whom the kingship belongs; to him shall all the kingdoms be subject. How beautiful is King Messiah. . . . How beautiful are the eyes of King Messiah.”

4Qpatr: “until the Messiah of justice, the sprout of David, comes; for to him and to his seed has been given the covenant of kingship.” (quoted in n. 24, vol. 1A, p. 220 in Targum Neofiti I.)

Numbers 24:8

"God brings him out of Egypt, he is for him like the horns of the wild ox. He shall devour the nations who are his adversaries, and shall crush their bones in pieces, and shatter them with his arrows."

Palestinian Targum: "their Redeemer shall be from themselves . . . and the kingdom of the Messiah shall be exalted." (quoted on p. 40, Targum Neofiti I)

Numbers 24:17

"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, and a scepter shall rise from Israel, and shall crush through the forehead of Moab, and tear down all the sons of Sheth."

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: "when a mighty king of the house of Jacob shall reign, and shall be anointed Messiah, wielding the mighty scepter of Israel."

Numbers 24:20

And he looked at Amalek and took up his discourse and said, "Amalek was the first of the nations, but his end shall be destruction."

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: "in the days of King Messiah"

Psalms 45:3-8

"Gird Thy sword on Thy thigh, O Mighty One, in Thy splendor and Thy majesty! And in Thy majesty ride on victoriously, for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness; Let Thy right hand teach Thee awesome things. Thine arrows are sharp; The peoples fall under Thee; Thine arrows are in the heart of the King's enemies. Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness;

Therefore God, Thy God, has anointed Thee With the oil of joy above Thy fellows. All Thy garments are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made Thee glad."

The Targum to the Hagiographa: "Your beauty, O King Messiah, surpasses that of ordinary men. The Spirit of prophecy has been bestowed upon your lips. . . . Your throne of glory, O Lord, endures forever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy Kingdom."

Isaiah 9:6-7

"For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this."

The Isaiah Targum: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and he will accept the law upon himself to keep it, and his name will be called the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, existing forever, the Messiah, in whose days peace will increase upon us."

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

The Isaiah Targum: "Behold, my servant, the Messiah, shall prosper, he shall be exalted and increase, and shall be very strong. Just as the house of Israel hoped for him many days . . . so shall he scatter many kings; kings shall be silent before him . . . the righteous shall be exalted before him . . . as a man of sorrows and appointed sicknesses . . . he will beseech concerning our sins and our iniquities for our sake will be forgiven . . . by his teaching his peace will increase upon us, and in that we attach ourselves to his words our sins will be forgiven us . . . they shall see the kingdom of their Messiah . . . by his wisdom shall he make innocents to be accounted innocent, to subject many to the laws; and he shall beseech concerning their sins . . . because he handed over his soul to death, and subjected the rebels to the law; yet he will beseech concerning the sins of many, and to the rebels it shall be forgiven for him."

Micah 4:8

“And as for you, tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Zion, to you it will come—Even the former dominion will come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.”

The Targum Of The Minor Prophets: “And you, O Messiah of Israel, who have been hidden away from the sins of the congregation of Zion, the kingdom is destined to come to you.”

Micah 5:2

“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”

The Targum Of The Minor Prophets: “And you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, you who were too small to be numbered among the thousands of the house of Judah, from you shall come forth before me the Messiah, to exercise dominion over Israel, he whose name was mentioned from old, from ancient times.”

Several things are clear just from the few references given above:

1. The Targums reveal that the early Jews did in fact hold to common beliefs concerning the coming Messiah. There is no indication in any of the Targums that there was any disagreement over what texts applied to Him and what He was to do when He came. The liberal myth that the Jews did not have common beliefs concerning the Messiah cannot stand before the Targums.
2. The messianic views reflected in the Targums are so consistent that the only logical conclusion we can come to is that these views had already been worked out in the Jewish community. In his conclusion of his study of the Targum on the Minor Prophets, Levey states that:

... there is a definitely unified and coherent thread of Messianic thought that stretches from the beginning to the end of the Targum's rendering of the Prophets.¹⁰

3. The Messiah is not the nation of Israel or a symbolic myth but an actual person who will come to set Israel free from sin and its curse. He is even identified as the "Redeemer" who will come.
4. The Messiah is more than a mere man. He is a supernatural and sinless divine being who pre-existed from all eternity according to the Targums on Micah 4:8 and Micah 5:2. Levey comments:

The idea that the Messiah will be hidden away, possibly from the time of Creation, untouched by the sins of Israel, is a reflection of apocalyptic rabbinic thinking, as well as Christian.¹¹

5. According to the Isaiah Targum, the Messiah is "the Mighty God" of Isaiah 9:6. Thus the Messiah bears divine titles and manifests divine attributes. This is particularly clear from the Pseudo-Jonathan Targum on Psalms 45 where the "anointed Messiah" (v. 17) is identified as "the Lord" (v.8) and as "the Memra of the Lord" in verse 23.
6. The name "Memra" (lit. speech or voice) was one of the ways the intertestamental Jews spoke of God appearing on earth. Martin McNamara points out in his introduction to Targum Neofiti:

The designation for God most characteristic of all the Targums is "the Memra of the Lord." This is found 314 times in NF and 636 in Nfmg; in Frag. Tgs. about 99 times; in Ctg text 97 times in texts published by Kahle; in Onq 178 times and 322 Ps. J.¹²

The "Memra of the Lord" is described in the Targums as doing the same things that the New Testament describes Jesus as the "Word of God" doing. For example, just as the Targums on Genesis 1:1 say that the Memra created the world, John 1:1-3 says that the Word created the world. Just as the Targums attribute the theophanies to appearances of the Memra in human form (see the Targums on Gen. 3:8; 18; 19:24; 32:30, etc.), the New Testament attributes the theophanies to the pre-existent Word of God (John 12:38-41).

Obviously, the "Memra of the Lord" is more important for the origins of the New Testament's concept of Jesus as the "Word of God" than Philo's pagan Greek philosophy.

7. Both the suffering and death of the Messiah are clearly predicted

in the Targum on Isaiah 53: "... because he handed over his soul to death." His death is even connected to the forgiveness of sins.

8. The Holy Spirit is referred to throughout the Targums.

McNamara comments:

The expression "the Holy Spirit" occurs in Nf Gen. 41:38; 42:1 (also in P); Exod. 31:3 (corrected); 35:31; Num. 11:17, 25, 26, 29; 14:24; 24:2; 27:18 - thirteen times in all. It also occurs in Nfmg Gen. 31:21 and Exod. 2:12 (also in PVB). In Onq. the only designation is "the spirit of prophecy"; the use of "holy spirit" in Onq Gen. 45:27 is possibly due to the influence of midrashim. The expression "the Holy Spirit" is found fifteen times in Ps.-J. and "the spirit of prophecy" eleven times.¹³

An analysis of the Targums reveals that the Holy Spirit is alive and active and doing the kinds of things (e.g., speaking) which only God can do. The personhood and deity of the Spirit of God is manifest in the way the Targums speak of Him.

Biblical scholars are only beginning to understand the influence of the Targums on the hermeneutic operating in the New Testament. It is increasingly clear that the authors of the New Testament had access to pre-Christian Targums as well as the Hebrew text and the Septuagint. McNamara comments:

In the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch we have in the main material coming down from pre-Christian times which must be studied by everyone who wishes to understand the state of Judaism at the time of the birth of Christianity. And we possess this material in a language of which we can say that it is similar to that spoken by the earliest Christians. It is material, the importance of which can be scarcely exaggerated.¹⁴

Ancient Jewish Commentaries

Post-exilic Judaism began to produce commentaries on the Scriptures in order to promote uniformity of belief. These commentaries are called the Midrash Rabbah or the Midrashim.¹⁵ They clearly reflect Jewish beliefs before and after the advent of Christianity. Their influence on the New Testament has been noted by both Jewish and Christian scholars.¹⁶

We have counted over two hundred references in the Midrash to the Messiah. Like the Targums, these messianic interpretations are set forth with certainty as well as clarity. There was no controversy or confusion because these were common beliefs among the Jews.

We will examine only a few of these passages. Please note that several biblical passages are often put together and given a Messianic interpretation. All references are keyed to the Soncino edition of the Midrash:

1. On Gen. 2:1 "And in the Messianic future the Holy One, blessed be He, will heal the injury, for it is said, (Isa. 30:26), i.e., 'He will heal the wound of the world.'" (I:73)
2. On Gen. 2:4 "Though these things were created in their fullness, yet when Adam sinned they were spoiled, and they will not return to their perfection until the son of Perez [viz. Messiah] comes." (I:92)
3. On Gen. 3:15 "In the Messianic age all will be healed save the serpent and the Gibeonite." (I:163)
4. On Gen. 32:5 "AN ASS refers to the royal Messiah, for it says of him, 'Lowly, and riding upon an ass' (Zech. 9:9)." (II:698)
5. On Gen. 49:8 "Furthermore, the royal Messiah will be descended from the tribe of Judah, as it says, 'And it came to pass in that day, that the root of Jesse, that standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek.' (Isa. 11:10) Thus, from the tribe of Judah were descended Solomon, who built the second Temple; and from him will he descended the royal Messiah, who will rebuild the Temple." (II:901) "Finally, of the royal Messiah it is written, 'And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.' (Isa. 11:2)" (II:902)
6. On Gen. 49:9 "Judah is a lion's whelp: This alludes to Messiah the son of David." (II:906)
7. On Gen. 49:10 "The scepter [staff] shall not depart from Judah alludes to the Messiah, son of David, who will chastise the state with a staff, as it says, 'Thou shalt break them with a rod [staff] of iron.' (Ps. 2:9)" (II:906) "Until Shiloh comes. This indicates that all the nations of the world will bring a gift to Messiah the son of David, as it says, 'In that time shall a present be brought unto the Yahweh of Hosts.' (Isa. 18:7)" (II:907)
8. On Gen. 49:11 "Israel will not require the teaching of the royal Messiah in the future, for it says, 'Unto him shall the nations seek.' (Isa. 11:10), but not Israel. If so, for what purpose will the

- royal Messiah come, and what will he do? He will come to assemble the exiles of Israel and to give them [the Gentiles] thirty precepts, as it says, And I said unto them: 'If ye think good, give me my hire and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my hire thirty pieces of silver.' (Zech. 9:12)." (II:957-958)
9. On Ruth 5:6 "The future Redeemer will be like the former Redeemer. Just as the former Redeemer revealed himself and later was hidden from them . . . so the future Redeemer will be revealed to them and then be hidden from them." (VIII:64-65)
 10. On Lam. 1:16 "What is the name of King Messiah? R. Abba b. Kahana said: His name is 'Lord' as it is stated, 'And this is the name whereby he shall be called, 'LORD' (Heb. YHWH) our Righteousness'" (Jer. 23:6). (VII: 135-136)
 11. On Isa. 9:6 "He said to him, 'I have yet to raise up the Messiah,' of whom it is written, 'For a child to us is born.' (Isa. 9:6)" (VI:5)
 12. On Isa. 53:5 "The fifth interpretation makes it refer to the Messiah. COME HITHER: refers to royal state. AND EAT OF THE BREAD refers to the bread of royalty; AND DIP THY MORSEL IN THE VINEGAR refers to his sufferings, as it said, 'But he was wounded because of our transgressions.' (Isa. 53:5)" (VII:64)
 13. On Isa. 53:12 "but in the Messianic age we are told: 'For ye shall not go out in haste, neither shall ye go by flight.' (Isa. 53:12)" (III:237)

Enough has been presented to demonstrate that the Midrash follows the messianic interpretations found in the Septuagint and in the Targums. The Messiah is both King and Redeemer. He is "the child" who would be born (Isa. 9:6). He is "the Christ" mentioned in Psalms 2. His deity is revealed by His name "Yahweh" (YHWH) (Jer. 23:6). He will enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Zech. 9:9). He will suffer and die for our sins (Isa. 53). Then He will be hidden from us. The Gentiles will follow Him, etc.

Anyone familiar with the New Testament immediately recognizes the importance of these messianic prophecies. Please note that both Psalms 2 and Isaiah 9:6 are messianically interpreted and that the "servant of the Lord" in Isaiah 53 who suffers for our sins is clearly identified as the Messiah.

Jesus fulfilled the very prophecies which the Jews predicted the Messiah would fulfill. Was He born at Bethlehem? Did He ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, etc.? What He did not fulfill at His first coming, He will fulfill when He returns according to the New Testament.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

For over a century, the liberals have been quite dogmatic that the origins of the New Testament must be located in pagan sources. But this *a priori* assumption was an argument from silence developed *before* the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the modern translations of intertestamental literature. In fact, the leading liberal scholars who developed the theory never actually examined any of the primary source materials and, thus, they often spoke out of sheer ignorance.

When the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was first announced in the early 1950's, liberal theologians assumed that these Scrolls would prove that the New Testament's concept of the Messiah came from pagan sources. Books were rushed into print which stated that this was the case, before most of the Scrolls had been translated. One such writer was the liberal clergyman Rev. A. Powell Davies whose book *The Meaning Of The Dead Sea Scrolls* was published in 1956. From the outset, Davies assumed the Werde-Bousset thesis. Even though he had never seen a single Scroll, he dogmatically states:

There were many Pagan deities during the time of Jesus and afterwards for whom quite similar claims were made and in whose names were preached quite similar doctrines. Mithras was a Redeemer of mankind; so was Tammuz, Adonis and Osiris. The view eventually taken on Jesus as a redeemer was not a Judaic concept; nor was it held by the first Christians in Palestine. The Messiah the Jews and the Judaic Christians expected was not the Son of God but a messenger from God, not one who saved by blood-atonement but one whose salvation came from his rule on the earth in a Messianic kingdom.¹⁷

Dr. William LaSor, one of the well known scholars who actually worked on the Scrolls, was shocked to see such utter nonsense being set forth by liberal clergyman. His comments bear repeating:

More recently we have seen the appearance of pulp works that seek to ridicule Christian ministers and belittle Jesus Christ—all in the name of the Dead Sea Scrolls. I refer to the works by A.P. Davies and C.F. Potter. If it were not for the fact that tens of thousands of persons, chiefly young people, are taking these seriously, I would take no notice of them. They have no claim to Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship whatsoever, and their

arguments against New Testament Christianity are at least forty years old and have been answered many times.¹⁸

Dr. LaSor's warning is still needed today because liberals, humanists, atheists, and Muslims are still using the Werde-Bousset thesis as an apologetic against Christianity. For example, although Thomas Sheenan's book *The First Coming* (1986) was written thirty years after Davies' book, he still assumes that:

Christian evangelists rewrote their vision of Jesus and made him into the cosmic redeemer who had conquered the malevolent powers of the world.¹⁹

According to Sheenan, Christianity derived its christology from the surrounding pagan religions and not from early Judaism.²⁰ Like Davies and Potter, Sheenan was not a Scroll scholar. Their books were based entirely on secondary sources written by other liberals who likewise depended entirely on secondary sources.

Books written by Allegro (*The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Faith*) and by Baigent and Leigh (*The Dead Sea Scroll Deception*) are so far from the truth that they are ridiculous.²¹ The well-known Scroll scholar Joseph Fitzmeyer went on record saying:

Such misinformation is a part of a larger pattern of errors and uninformed statements that make the Baigent and Leigh book itself *the* deception par excellence about the Dead Sea Scrolls!²²

In reality, the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls has been a boon for evangelical theologians and a bane for liberal theologians because the Scrolls demonstrate *continuity* between the Testaments and that the deity of the Messiah was a Jewish concept and not something imported from paganism.

In order to escape this logical conclusion, some liberal scholars have now suggested redating the Dead Sea Scrolls from B.C. to A.D. and that Christians wrote the Scrolls instead of Jews!²³ But as Prof. F.F. Bruce points out in his book *Jesus & Christian Origins Outside The New Testament*:

The question has repeatedly been raised if the Qumran documents make any reference to Jesus or Christian origins. The answer is NO. . . . practically all the Qumran texts dealing

with religious topics are assigned on palaeographical grounds to the pre-Christian decades.²⁴

Why would anyone claim that the early Jewish literature was really written by Christians in the first century? The obvious reason is that the Scrolls and other Jewish literature from that time period fully support the New Testament in its messianic interpretation of the Old Testament. The early Jewish literature is so similar to early Christian beliefs that either we must accept the Jewish origin of the New Testament or the Christian origin of the early Jewish literature.

Against all scientific evidence, a few liberal scholars have tried to turn the Dead Sea Scrolls into Christian writings. This attempt to escape the evidence caused Prof. Schiffman of New York University to state:

As to the theory itself, as far as I am personally concerned, it is a lot of nonsense.²⁵

Liberals have tried the redating game before. The Prayer of Manasseh was re-dated from pre-Christian to post-Christian because it "felt" Christian to them. But its pre-Christian Jewish character has now been demonstrated beyond all doubt. The same will be shown for the Scrolls.²⁶

Now that all the Scrolls have been published, it is quite clear that the material, which lay unpublished for several decades, was not kept back because they disproved Christianity, but because the reverse was true. The Messianic interpretation of the Old Testament found in the Scrolls once again demonstrates that the New Testament was perfectly in line with the expectations of early Judaism. The Werde-Bousset thesis is no longer tenable.

Having studied the primary source material for some time,²⁷ there are certain things found in the Scrolls which should be noted. Anti-Trinitarians may not like it, but these things are the facts found in the Dead Sea Scrolls:

1. The Hebrew word מָשִׁיחַ (Messiah) is found throughout the Dead Sea Scrolls.²⁸ This fact reveals the Jews were expecting the Messiah in the intertestamental period. This is why the New Testament was never criticized as being "odd" or "out of place" by contemporary Judaism. The following citations reveal the clarity of these references:

Those who walk in them, in the time of wickedness until there arises the Messiah of Aaron. (CD Col. XII, 23) . . . until there

arises the Messiah of Aaron and Israel. He shall atone for their sins. . . . (CD Col. XIV, 19) For the heavens and the earth will listen to his Messiah, and all that is in them will not turn away from the holy precepts. (4QMessianic Apocalypse (4Q5212) Frag. 2 col. 11:1)

If there were no general expectation in first century Judaism that the Messiah was about to appear, as some liberals still claim, how could the various false Messiahs which arose during that period gain such large followings? Zeitlin comments:

Messianic expectations were so high among the people that several pretenders managed successfully to attract to themselves large numbers of followers.²⁹

2. Just as there are other names and titles for the Messiah in the Old Testament, such as "The Branch," "The Elect One," "The Bud," "the Shoot," etc., these are likewise found in the Scrolls. Thus, the word מָשִׁיחַ (Messiah) is not found in the context that does not logically mean the Messiah is not under discussion. He may be referred to by one of his other names or titles. For example, "the Branch of David" (לְדָוִד עֵצָה) mentioned in 4Q285 is a clear reference to the Messiah and he is explicitly called "the righteous Messiah" in 4QPGen.³⁰
3. The Scrolls consistently give the same messianic interpretation of the Old Testament as found in the Septuagint, the Targums, and the Midrash. Such classic texts as Genesis 49; Numbers 24; Psalms 2; Isaiah 11; etc. are all viewed as referring to the coming Messiah. As Collins pointed out:

. . . the Scrolls share the common understanding of the centuries around the turn of the era, that such texts as Isaiah 11 and Numbers 24 should be interpreted with reference to the Davidic messiah.³¹

In 1QM X, 6-7, Numbers 24:17-19 the typical messianic interpretation is given. This is also given in another Scroll:

A star has departed from Jacob, and a scepter has arisen from Israel. He shall crush the temples of Moab, and cut to pieces all the sons of Seth. (4Q175 [4Qtest] 12-13)

Second Samuel 7:12-14 and Amos 9:11 are applied to the Messiah in 4QFlorilegium (4Q174 [4QFlor] 10-13):

YHWH declares to you that he will build you a house. I will raise up your seed after you and establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to me. This refers to the Branch of David, who will arise . . . on Zion in the last days, as it is written: I will raise up the Hut of David which has fallen. This refers to the Hut of David which has fallen, who will arise to save Israel.

This same Scroll applies Psalms 2 to the Messiah:

Why do the nations become agitated and the peoples plot nonsense? The kings of the earth agree and the rulers conspire together against YHWH and against his Messiah. (4QFlorilegium (4Q174 [4QFlor]), 18-19)

The "Prophet" whose coming was predicted in Deuteronomy 18:18-19 is the Messiah according to 4QTestimonia (4Q175 [4QTest], 5-8)

Genesis 49:10 is also interpreted as referring to the Messiah:

A sovereign shall not be removed from the tribe of Judah. While Israel has the dominion, there will not lack someone who sits on the throne of David. . . . Until the Messiah of justice comes, the Branch of David. For to him and to his descendants has been give the covenant of royalty over his people for all everlasting generations (4QGenesis Peshar (4QpGen), Col. V, 1-6)

The prophecy of Isaiah 11:1 is fulfilled by the Messiah according to 4QIsaiah Peshar (4Q161 [4QpIs] Frags. 8-10 col. III, 11-25)

The interpretation of the word concerns the Shoot of David which will sprout in the final days, since with the breath of his lips he will execute his enemies. . . . he will rule over all the peoples . . .

The Messiah Jesus will destroy his enemies "by the breath of his mouth" and then rule over all the peoples according to II Thessalonians 2:8.

Another Scroll even states that the Messiah will be killed:

A Shoot will emerge from the stump of Jesse . . . the Bud of David will go into battle with . . . and the Prince of the Congregation will kill him, the Bud of David . . . and his wounds . . . (4QWar Scroll (4Q285 [4QM]) Frag. 5:2-4)

The Messiah was called "Melchizedek" as well as "David" in that they were types of the Messiah. He is even described as atoning for the sins of the people of God:

Its interpretation for the last days . . . He will proclaim liberty for them, to free them from the debt of all their iniquities . . . atonement will be made for all the sons of God and for the men of the lot of Melchizedek. . . . Melchizedek will carry out the vengeance of God's judges on this day and they shall be freed from the hands of Belial. . . . This is the day of peace about which God spoke of old through the words of Isaiah the prophet (Isa. 52:7). . . . Its interpretation . . . the messenger is the Messiah of the Spirit about whom Daniel spoke (Dan. 7:13-14). . . . and the messenger of good who announces salvation is the One about whom it is written that he will send him to comfort the afflicted (Isa. 61:2-3). (11QMelechizedek (11Q13 [11QMelch]) col. II, 4-19)

This might explain why the Book of Hebrews in the New Testament emphasizes the Mechizedekian character of the priesthood of the Messiah Jesus (Heb. 7:1-25).

The Messiah as the "Teacher of Righteousness" will fulfill Isaiah 40:11 according to 4QIsaiah Peshar (4Q165 [4QIs], Frags. 1-2)

The "Shepherd" who would be smitten according to Zechariah 13:7 is "the Messiah of Aaron and Israel," according to CD (CD-B) Col XIX, 7-11. The appearance of the Messiah is understood as the time "when God visits the earth," according to verse 6! The deity of the Messiah could not be clearer.

4. The Messiah is called the "Son of God" in the following text found in Cave #4:

He will be great over the earth . . . all will worship him. . . . He shall be called great and he will be designated by his name. He will be called "Son of God" and they will call Him "Son of the Most High". . . . His kingdom will be an

eternal kingdom, and all His paths in truth and uprightness. . . . The sword shall cease from the land and all the provinces shall pay him homage. He is a great God of gods. . . . His kingdom will be an eternal kingdom, and none of the abysses of the earth shall prevail against it. (4QAramaic Apocalypse [4Q246] Col. I:7-9; Col. II: 1,5-8)

Perhaps this text explains why Luke used the following terms when he described the birth of Jesus:

"He will be great and will *called the Son of the Most High*; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will *reign* over the house of Jacob *forever*; and *His kingdom will have no end*." (Luke 1:32-33) [He] shall be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:35d)

Luke was not using pagan Greek hero worship language to describe the person and work of Jesus when he called Him, "The Son of the Most High" and "the Son of God." He was perfectly in line with the contemporary Jewish understanding of the divine Sonship of the Messiah. Dr. James Charlesworth, Director of Princeton's Dead Sea Scroll Project, comments:

The concept of "Son of God" in early Jewish literature helps link some Old Testament passages in which it denotes a divine being with many New Testament periscopes. Contrary to Bultmann's claim that "Son of God" in early Christianity evolved under the influence of the mystery religions, the major development of Christology from Jesus to Paul occurred within Judaism.³²

Please note that in the Scroll quoted above, the Son of God is *worshipped*. Since the Aramaic word *y'bdwn* in 1:8 means to worship deity (cf. Dan. 7:14), this has proven to be a major stumbling block to those who try to reduce the "Son of the Most High" to a mere earthly king.

That the "Son of God" is called "a great God of gods" is also highly significant. The expression "a God of gods" is found in the Aramaic text of Daniel:

The king answered Daniel and said, "Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery." (Dan. 2:47)

The phrase is also found in Daniel 11:36. The deity of the Son of God is once again crystal clear. He is "a great God of gods." The Messiah does divine works, bears divine titles and names, manifest divine attributes and is worshipped as God. Thus, He cannot be a created angel or a mere man.

5. The early speculation that the Qumran community expected two different Messiahs has been questioned on grammatical and textual grounds. Instead of two different Messiahs, the Scrolls could be speaking of the Messiah doing two different things.³³

Enough has been quoted to reveal that instead of disproving the New Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls actually prove that it is Jewish in its concept of the divine personage and atoning work of the Messiah.

Dr. Charles F. Pfeifer summarizes the view of the Messiah found in the Scrolls in the following words:

The early church took seriously the ideas of a royal and a priestly Messiah, but insisted that they were the same individual. The Gospels trace the genealogy of Jesus through David and make it clear that his is a royal Messiahship. The Epistle to the Hebrews, moreover, seeks to show that Jesus is also a priestly Messiah, not after the Aaronic order as the Qumran community expected, but after the older and more honorable order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7). The church likewise ascribes to Jesus the office of prophet. The Qumran expectations of an eschatological prophet, a Messiah of Aaron and a Messiah of Israel finds, in Christian teaching, a perfect fulfillment. All of these functions, indeed all of the promises of God, find expression in the historical Jesus who, in His own person, serves as the perfect Prophet, Priest and King.³⁴

The Pseudepigrapha

The Pseudepigrapha is composed of over sixty-five early Jewish books which, for the most part, were written before Jesus. The subjective methodology employed by some liberal scholars is to date a book on the basis of whether it "feels" Christian or Jewish to them. Emotionalism and gut reaction may have a place in psycho-drama, but not in scholarship. Objective external and internal evidence such as grammar, syntax, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, cultural elements, and references to places, events and people is the only way to date a document fairly.

We prefer to date a book on scientific grounds. For example, if a book speaks of the Temple as an ongoing place of worship, it would be foolish to date its composition after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70

The Pseudepigrapha provides a great deal of material on early Jewish expectations of the coming Messiah. The Psalms of Solomon is an example of the deep longing in the Jewish heart for the Lord Messiah to come. The "Lord Messiah" is the "son of David" who comes to take his throne (Pss. Sol. 17:21). He will gather the people of God (Pss. Sol. 17:26). The Gentiles will give him gifts and serve him (Pss. Sol. 17:30-31). He is the "Son of God" of Psalms 2 who will break the enemies of God with an iron rod (Pss. Sol. 17:24). He is the "anointed One" of Isaiah 11:2 (Pss. Sol. 17:37). "His words will be purer than the finest gold, the best" (Pss. Sol. 17:43).

The Messiah is identified as "the Lord Messiah" (Pss. Sol. 17:32; 18:7). Notice that the original does not read "The Lord's Messiah," as if the divine name of "Lord" is in the possessive case. Both the Greek and Syriac text clearly read "the Lord Messiah" because he is the LORD. The words *Kurios Cristos* in the Psalms of Solomon are the same as the *Cristos Kurios* found in Luke 2:11. The similarity cannot be ignored.

Notice, also, that we are told in Psalms of Solomon 18:5:

May God cleanse Israel in the day of mercy and blessing, In the day of election when he brings back his Messiah.

Charlesworth's comments are revealing:

The author was referring either to the return of an anointed one like David or, as seems more probable, to the return of the Messiah, who is like the wonderful King David. If Jews held a belief in the return of the Messiah, then we have an important foundation for the Christian belief in the parousia of Jesus. At this point messianology flows into christology. My first suggestion is that we consider that some early Jews contemplated the return of the Messiah.³⁵

Second Baruch 29:3 prophesied that "it will happen that when all that which should come to pass in these parts has been accomplished, the Messiah (i.e., Anointed One) will begin to be revealed." The Messiah clearly pre-existed his coming to earth and after his first coming, "he returns in glory" (30:1). He comes to resurrect the righteous (30:2) and to destroy the wicked (39:7-40:40). The Messiah will gather all the nations

before him and judge them (72:1-6). Then He will set up his glorious kingdom:

And it will happen that **after** he has brought down everything which is in the world, and has sat down in eternal peace on the throne of the kingdom, then joy will be revealed and rest will appear. And health will descend in dew, and illness will vanish, and fear and tribulation and lamentation will pass away from among men, and joy will encompass the earth. . .and the asps and dragons will come out of their holes to subject themselves to a child. (2 Baruch 73:1-6)

Second Baruch 30:1-2 sounds so much like New Testament christology that some liberals have suggested that it "must" be a Christian interpolation. But as Dr. James Charlesworth, Director of the Dead Sea Scrolls Project at Princeton University, points out, ". . . it is not a Christian passage as P. Volz contended."³⁶ Here is the text in full from R.H. Charles' classic translation:

And it will come to pass **after** these things, when the time of the advent of the Messiah is fulfilled, that He shall return in glory. Then all who have fallen asleep in hope of Him shall rise again.

His footnote on the passage bears repeating:

This seems to mean that **after** His reign the Messiah will return in glory to heaven. "Advent" may be rendered "presence," i.e. visible reign on earth. **return in glory**, back to heaven where He was before His revealing on earth. For His pre-existence see I Enoch xlv 1.2, xlviii. 3 (note), & etc.³⁷

Some early Jews clearly believed in the following sequence of events for the Messiah: his pre-existence, his appearance on earth, his miracles, his death, His return in glory, and then the resurrection. Even the casual reader of the New Testament can see the parallels.

In the Fourth Book of Ezra, the Messiah is described as "my Son the Messiah" (7:28-29) and "my Son" (13:32, 37, 52; 14:9). We are told "my son the Messiah will appear" (7:28) and perform miracles (13:1-13). Then "my son the Messiah will die" (7:29). He is the Lion who will come forth to do battle with the enemies of God (12:31). But before he comes to judge the wicked, the Messiah will be "kept until the end of days" (12:32). Until

then, "no one on earth can see my Son or those with him, except in the time of his day" (13:52). The righteous "shall be taken up from among men, and henceforth you shall live with my Son and with those who are like you, until the times are ended" (14:9).

The reference to the death of the Messiah is so clear in 4 Ezra 7:29, that some liberals have claimed that it "must" be a Christian interpolation. But modern scholars have pointed out that the documentary evidence is so strong that it cannot be an interpolation.³⁸

In First Enoch, the Messiah is called the "Son of man" (49:2), "Righteous One" (38:2), the "Elect One" (38:6), and "my Son" (105:2). The Messiah pre-exists from all eternity before he comes to earth (46:1-2; 62:7).

At that hour, that Son of Man was given a name, in the presence of the Lord of the Spirits, the Before-Time, even before the creation of the sun and the moon, before the creation of the stars, he was given a name in the presence of the Lord of the spirits. He will become a staff for the righteous ones in order that they may lean on him and not fall. He is the light of the Gentiles and he will become the hope of those who are sick in their hearts. All those who dwell upon the earth shall fall down and worship before him. (I Enoch 48:2-6)

Eternal punishment awaits those who "have denied the Lord of the spirits and his Messiah" (I Enoch 48:10). The fact that the Messiah is to be "praised upon the earth" (I Enoch 52:4) and we are to "worship" him (I Enoch 48:6) reveals that he is divine.

Some liberals have suggested that the "worship" offered to the Messiah was only the worship given to angels. But at no point in the intertestamental literature are we encouraged to worship or pray to the angels. The few times that men tried to worship an angel, the angel rebuked them:

I fell upon my face, and I worshipped him. [But] he said to me, "Take heed! Don't worship me [because] I am not the Lord Almighty. I am the great angel, Eremiel." (Apoc. of Zeph. 6:14f)

The same is true of the New Testament. When John tried to worship an angel, the angel said, "Do not do that! . . . Worship only God!" (Rev. 19:14) The New Testament is in line with the passage from the Apoc. of Zephaniah. Thus the idea that Jews or Christians worshipped angels does

not the fit the Jewish culture of the first century. The worship given to the Messiah was divine worship.

The Messiah is described as "the son of Joseph" and the "son of David" in III Enoch 45:5. Unto him shall the people gather and they shall eat with him (48:10).

The "Messenger of Yahweh," in whom God's name dwelt (Exod. 23:21-22), is given the name Metatron. He is described as the "lesser YHWH" in 3 Enoch 12:5; 48C:7; 48D:1[90] to distinguish Him from the "greater YHWH" mentioned in 48B:44. The biblical precedent for two YHWHs can be found in Genesis 19:24.

Notice also that the second YHWH, while on earth, is "lesser" in rank than the first YHWH but this does not negate the fact that both of them are still YHWH. They are one in nature although separate in rank.

Given the concept of two YHWHs, is it any wonder that Jewish Christians like the Apostle John had no difficulty in believing that the Messiah Jesus was both "equal with God" the Father (John 5:18) and, at the same time, less than God the Father (John 14:28)? It is easy to see how John could believe that the Father and the Son were "one" in nature (John 10:30) but separate in rank (John 14:28) because such an idea was perfectly *Jewish*.

The Mishnah and the Talmuds

The Talmud is divided into the Mishnah and the Gemara. The Mishnah was begun after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. but goes on to include material up to 220 A.D. This is called the Tannaite period. Although it was written after Jesus, it does contain pre-Christian Jewish citations.

The Gemara picks up after the Mishnah and includes the Jewish rabbinic literature up to the fifth century and is called the Amoraim period. But it must be remembered that the Gemara also retains much older Mishnahic statements.

The continuity between the Mishnah, the Talmuds, and the New Testament in their messianic ideas was first fully documented in 1859 by the famous Cambridge scholar J.B. Lightfoot in *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. Sadly, he only got as far as I Cor. before he died.

The German scholars Hermann Strack and Paul Billerbeck completed the New Testament and added more material in *Kommertar zum Nuen Testament aus Talmud und Mishrasch* (1922-1961). In 1983, Charles Gianotti wrote *The New Testament and the Mishnah* which gives a cross-reference index between the New Testament and the Mishnah. We used

Herbert Danby's translation, *The Mishnah* and the Soncino edition of the Babylonian Talmud.³⁹

Since the Mishnah is primarily an exposition of the rabbinic laws which govern everyday life, the Messiah is mentioned by name only twice (Ber. 1:5; Sot. 9:13). Given the legislative nature of the Mishnah, this is not surprising.

We find in the Mishnah what must be described as a "Trinitarian" passage in Sot. 9:13-15. It first refers to the Messiah, then to "our Father in heaven," and finally to "the Holy Spirit." It even states that the Holy Spirit is the One who resurrects the dead!

Saintliness leads to the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit leads to the resurrection of the dead. (Sot. 9:15 cf.)

When we turn to the Talmud, once again, the same Old Testament passages which the New Testament gives a messianic interpretation are also interpreted in this way in the Talmud. The Talmudic scholar Alfred Edersheim pointed out that the Talmuds give a messianic interpretation to over 456 passages in the Old Testament.⁴⁰

In Sot. 49a we find two references to "our Father who is in heaven" in conjunction with a reference to "the Messiah." The references to "our Father who is in heaven" in early Jewish literature is a solid refutation of the so-called "Jesus Seminar" which had the audacity to claim that Jesus could *not* have spoken the Lord's Prayer because the language was not contemporary with His day. Only someone totally ignorant of early Jewish literature could make such a foolish statement.

Sanhedrin 99a gives us the general rabbinic messianic viewpoint:

All the prophets prophesied only of the days of the Messiah.

That the Jews were longing for the coming of the Messiah is clear from the all-consuming question: "*When will the Messiah come?*" (San. 98a) The Jewish literature is clear that messianic expectations ran high in the Talmudic period.⁴¹ Thus, we need only give a few examples of the messianic character of the Talmudic material:

Old Testament Texts	Messianic Interpretation
Gen. 3:15	Sot. 49b
Gen. 49:10	San. 98b
Num. 24:17	San. 93b n. 4.
Ps. 2	A. Z. 3a-3b; Suk. 52a
Ps. 45	Shab. 63a

Ps. 72:17	San. 98b
Isa. 9:6	San. 94a
Isa. 11:1	San. 93b
Isa. 53	San. 98b
Dan. 7:9-13	San. 38b; 98a
Zech. 9:9	Ber. 56b
Zech. 12:10	Suk. 52a
Mic. 5:2	San. 98a-98b

The Talmud in Sukkah 52a refers to the Messiah as "the son of Joseph" who would be slain in fulfillment of Zechariah 12:10. In Sanhedrin 98b the death of the Messiah is described as a vicarious atonement for the sins of His people as a fulfillment of Isaiah 53. He will enter Jerusalem riding on an ass in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9 (Ber. 56b). All these things are familiar to anyone who has ever read the New Testament.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned by name in the Talmud and is clearly a divine person who acts and speaks as God. In Pesachim 117a, the Holy Spirit is mentioned five times as speaking. We are told four times that the Scriptures were written by "the inspiration of the Holy Spirit" (Megillah 7a) and twice that the prophets were "animated by the Holy Spirit" (B.B. 122a). Since the Scriptures are called "the Word of God," the Spirit who inspired them must be the God who inspired them. The New Testament parallels in II Timothy 3:16 and II Peter 1:21 are obvious.

Following the Mishnah, the Holy Spirit is also described as the Author of eternal life (A.Z. 20b). But even more interesting is the statement found in Sanhedrin 11a:

Our Rabbis taught: Since the death of the last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the Holy Spirit [of prophetic inspiration] departed from Israel.

Not only does this demonstrate that none of the intertestamental literature was viewed by the Rabbis as being inspired Scripture, but it also reveals that the New Testament picks up where the Old Testament leaves off.

Conclusion

The Jewish literature before, during, and after Jesus is not a wall separating the Testaments, but a solid granite bridge which links the two Testaments together. The continuity between the Old and New Testaments is established by any impartial examination of the literature of that period. The Old Testament is the bud and the New Testament is

the flower which bloomed when King Messiah came to deliver his people from their sins.

The Trinitarian finds in the early Jewish literature the theological terminology and ideas that explain why the New Testament was able to set forth the triune nature of God and the deity of the Messiah with such ease. The progress of doctrine which took place during the 400 years between Malachi and Matthew ultimately led to the early Church's formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Now the truth came to be known. New Testament christology was not derived from pagan sources, but from contemporary Judaism. James Charlesworth summarizes what modern liberal scholarship now admits:

The language of the New Testament is not a new creation; it is the crystallization of the living language used in Jewish circles in which the Old Testament was the sacred word of God. Christianity, it is clear, must not be defined as a religion divorced from its origins. Christianity not only inherited the Scriptures of the Jews; it was formed both by the Jewish means of interpreting these sacred works and by Jesus and his earliest followers, all of whom were Jews. And the interpretation occurred within Judaism; the earliest decades of Christianity, and perhaps its first one hundred years, were spent *within, then alongside of, Judaism*.⁴²

Once again the Trinitarian *a priori* is confirmed by the evidence and the anti-Trinitarian *a priori* is revealed as nothing more than ignorance combined with an anti-Christian bias. Let us never forget, bigotry is bigotry no matter if it is anti-Semitic or anti-Christian.

Notes

1. *The Messiah*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 34. See also my discussion of this issue in *The New Atheism and the Erosion of Freedom* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1994), 135-140.
2. Geza Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 214.
3. *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site*, ed. M. Wise, N. Golb, J. Collins, and D. Pardee (NY: The New York National Academy of Sciences, 1994), 427.
4. *Ibid.*, 212.
5. Irvine M. Zeitlin, *Jesus and the Judaism of His Time* (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), 48.
6. For an interesting discussion of this point see: Walter Zimmerli and Joachim Jeremias, "The Servant of God" ("Studies in Biblical Theology," No. 20, Naperville: Allenson, 1965).
7. This has been pointed out by Samson Levey, *The Messiah: An Aramaic Interpretation* (New York: Hebrew Union College, 1974), 26-27, 93; *The Aramaic Bible* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988), 6:164, n. 26; and by John Collins, *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site*, 219.
8. *The Aramaic Bible* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988), 1-14. This is the best translation available in English.
9. *Ibid.*, XVII to XVIII.
10. Levey, 103.
11. *Ibid.*, 92.
12. *The Aramaic Bible*, 1A:37.
13. *Ibid.*, 1A:38-39.
14. Martin McNamara, "Targumic Studies" (Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. XXVIII, 1966), 19.
15. *The Midrash Rabbah* (NY: Soncino, 1983), 1-10 covers the Torah and Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations.

16. *Midrash Rabbah*, 1:XXI-XXII.
17. A. Powell Davies, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (NY: Mentor Books, 1956), 90.
18. William Sanford LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Faith* (Chicago: Moody, 1962), 208.
19. Thomas Sheenan, *The First Coming* (NY: Vintage, 1986), 2009.
20. *Ibid.*, 183f.
21. Other examples of wild speculations used for anti-Christian polemics can be found in Allegro's, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Faith* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1979) and Baigent and Leigh's book *The Dead Sea Scroll Deception* (London: Summit, 1991).
22. *Methods of Investigation of The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site*, ed. Michael Wise, Norman Golb, John Collins, and Dennis Pardee (N.Y.: New York Academy of Science, 1994), 163-164, and n.5 on 164.
23. *Ibid.*, 355-370.
24. F. F. Bruce, *Jesus & Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 66-67.
25. *Methods of Investigation of The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site*, 367.
26. See the introduction to the Prayer in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James Charlesworth (NY: Doubleday, 1985) II:627-630. This was also noted in *Judaisms and their Messiahs*, ed. Jacob Neusner, William S. Green and Earnest Frerichs (NY: Cambridge, 1987), 226.
27. All our citations are from Floretino Garcia Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated* (Leiden: Brill, 1994) or from Robert Eisenman and Michael Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* (NY: Penguin, 1993).
28. See 1Q30:1:2; 4Q175; 4Q246; 4Q285; 4Q521; IQS 9:10-11; 1QSa 2:11-12,14,20; CD 1:5-7; 12:22-13:1, 20-22; 14:18-22; 19:6-11, 33-20:1; 4QP Bless 1 I 3-4; 4Q161; 4QP Isaiah 7-10, iii 15-19; 4Q174 (4QFlorilegium) 1-2 I 11; (4QTestimonia), etc.

29. Irvine M. Zeitlin, *Jesus and The Judaism of His Time* (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), 43.
30. *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site*, 215-217.
31. *Ibid.*, 227.
32. *The Old and The New Testament*, ed. James Charlesworth and Walter Weaver (Valley Forge: Trinity Press, 1993), 63. In his article, H. Anderson states, "Accordingly, since terms like 'son of God' or 'Lord' have a history of their own entirely within a Semitic context, the rise of christology can be understood on *Jewish* presuppositions," 515.
33. The two Messiahs view is upheld by Shemaryahu Talmon in *Judaisms and their Messiahs*, ed. Jacob Neusner, William S. Green and Earnest Frerichs (NY: Cambridge, 1987) and by Collins in *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site*, 222-227. But it is questioned by Michael Wise and James Tabor in "The Messiah at Qumran," (BAR: Nov/Dec 1992).
34. Charles F. Peiffer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962), 113.
35. *The Messiah*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 29.
36. *Ibid.*
37. R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), II:498. See also: *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (NY: Double Day, 1985), I:631, footnotes 30:a and 30:b.
38. *The Messiah*, 8.
39. John B. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica* (Peabody, MS: Hendriksen, 1979). Hermann Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommertar zum Nuen Testament aus Talmud und Mishrasch* (Munich: Beck, 1922-1961). Charles Gianotti, *The New Testament and the Mishnah* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983). All our citations come from Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1983) and *The Babylonian Talmud*, ed. I. Epstein, (London: Soncino, 1938).

40. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), II:710f.

41. For a detailed discussion of the Talmudic texts, consult Edersheim (see above). See also *Messiahism in the Talmudic Period*, ed. Leo Landman (NY: KTAV, 1979) and Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1979).

42. *The Old and the New Testament*, ed. James Charlesworth and Walter Weaver (Valley Forge: Trinity Press, 1993), 76.

Part IV

The New Testament Evidence

Chapter Fifteen

Opening Principles

Before we begin to exegete the New Testament, it is important to remember that we all approach the text of the New Testament with certain *a priori* assumptions. This reality cannot be ignored. Even those who deny it approach the New Testament with that denial as their *a priori*! If we do not identify and then reflect upon these *a priori* assumptions, our exegesis will be nothing more than an exercise in circular reasoning.

19th Century Liberalism

The typical 19th century liberal theologian assumed, as his *a priori*, that the God of the New Testament was a God of Love who was the Father of all mankind. As such, this loving God was quite different from the blood-thirsty, savage, tribal deity called Yahweh found in the Old Testament. The liberal theologian, thus, began with the *a priori* assumption that there is fundamental *discontinuity* between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament.

Jewish Scholars

The typical Jewish scholar also began with the *a priori* assumption that there is a fundamental *discontinuity* between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. The God of Israel is not the “pagan three-headed deity” of the New Testament. The anti-Semitism of the typical German liberal theologian was more than matched by the anti-Christian bigotry of typical German Jewish scholars.

The Modern Situation

This debate has resurfaced again in modern times, but, this time, liberal theologians have joined with Jewish scholars in dogmatically stating that there is no continuity between the Testaments because the New Testament has its origin in gentile, pagan religious sources instead of the Old Testament and intertestamental Judaism.¹

Evangelical Scholars

In bold contrast, evangelical theologians begin with the *a priori* assumption that there is a fundamental *continuity* between the God revealed in the Old Testament and the God revealed in the New Testament because *He is the same God*. The God of Abraham is the God of Moses who is the God of Isaiah who is the God of Paul who is the God of John, etc. Thus, true continuity exists *between* the Testaments.

The Same God in Both Testaments

The New Testament as well as the Old Testament clearly teaches that there is only one (I Cor. 8:6), true (I Thess. 1:9), eternal (I Tim. 1:11), living Being (I Thess. 1:9) who is God by nature (Gal. 4:8) and the Maker of heaven and earth (Acts 17:24). Polytheism has no place in either Testament. This fact should give pause to the typical anti-Trinitarian who naively assumes that the doctrine of the Trinity is a form of polytheism.

The triune nature of the God of Israel is actually brought to crystal clarity within the pages of the New Testament as it deepens and expands the Old Testament concept of the multi-personal nature of God. The Old Testament doctrine of the personhood and deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is the source of New Testament Trinitarianism.

The Nature of Progressive Revelation

Evangelical theologians also assume that progressive revelation does not mean contradiction, but development. The more God revealed, the more His people could understand. Progressive revelation is, thus, the basis of the continuity *within* and *between* the Testaments.

This is so fundamental to biblical Christianity that those who deny it invariably also deny the progressive nature of special revelation itself. Liberals usually assume that, if the understanding of God's people grows or deepens, this automatically means that a *different* God is in view. This is the same as saying that, because a man grows in his understanding of his wife over the years, she is now a *different* woman than the one he married! Progressive understanding does not logically imply that the object of that understanding has changed identity into something different.

The New Fulfills the Old

Unlike the Qur'an, the New Testament does not claim that it fell out of the sky one day. As we have already documented, the doctrines of the New Testament did not originate from the Greek mystery religions or some other pagan system of thought. The seminal ideas introduced in the Old Testament concerning the multi-personal nature of God and the divinity of the Messiah are expanded and deepened by the Apostles under divine inspiration. Thus, the New Testament should be viewed as a progressive development of Old Testament truths.

What We Expect to Find

What must be in order for what is to be what it is? If God is a Trinity, then we would expect to find certain things in the New Testament. For example, we would expect to find references made to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And when we pick up the New Testament, what do we find? We find multiple references to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, if the New Testament never referred to the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit, then we would have to question the fundamental biblical foundation of the Trinity doctrine.

They Must Prove Their Position

The same methodology applies to the anti-Trinitarians. They must ask themselves, "If our view of God is true, then what should we expect to find in the New Testament?"

In other words, they must give a *positive* demonstration of their view of God. They cannot naively assume that they have proven their view of God simply because they take pot-shots at the Trinity. If their expectations are not fulfilled, but rather contradicted by the biblical evidence, then they should in all honesty question their original hypothesis.

Conclusion

Our goal in this section is to discover what the New Testament documents reveal concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Our responsibility is to exegete the texts faithfully according to their respective literary and cultural contexts. By using sound hermeneutical

principles, we *can* discover what the authors of the New Testament believed about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Once this is accomplished, then we must decide if we *want* to believe in the Trinity. After all, if someone does not *want* to believe in the Trinity, then all the evidence in the world will not convince him.

But he said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead." (Luke 16:31)

Notes

1. The issue of the relationship of the Old and New Testament has exercised the minds of many theologians. The post-Bultmannian Liberal position is set forth in *The Old and The New Testaments*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Walter P. Weaver (Valley Forge: Trinity, 1993). Evangelical scholars have also written a great deal of literature on the subject in general. The following works deal in particular with the issue of the continuity between the Testaments.

Bruce, F.F., *Jesus & Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

France, R.T., *Jesus and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982).

Kim, Seyoon, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).

Machen, J. Gresham, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965).

Ridderbos, R.N., *Paul and Jesus* (Philadelphia: P & R, 1952).

Yamauchi, Edwin M., *Pre-Christian Gnosticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983).

Chapter Sixteen

God The Father

Most works on the Trinity do not spend much time on God the Father because it is often assumed that no one objects to God being described as "the Father." It is assumed that while Jews, Muslims, Unitarians, and Arians deny the deity of the Son, they still worship God the Father. But is this *a priori* assumption valid?

It is actually erroneous to assume that Jews, Muslims, Unitarians, Jehovah's Witnesses, United Pentecostals, etc., worship God the Father although they deny the Trinity. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, explains:

First, it is essential to observe the difference between that notion concerning God which is advanced by the monotheists of the Unitarian class and the Biblical representation of the Father. It has too often been assumed that all systems which recognize God at all, agree with the Christian system to the extent that the First Person is shared by all; that is, the Christian belief is satisfied if two other Persons are added to the *One God* who all are supposed to acknowledge alike. The error of this assumption is made evident when it is seen that the Christian's conception, based on the teaching of the Scriptures, is not that the *One God* of the Unitarians is the First Person plus two more who sustain doubtful title to the honors of Deity; but that the One God is that whole Essence which subsists as Father, Son and Spirit, and if any one of these three Persons is to be designated as a representative of the Unitarian idea of God to whom the Christian would add two more, any one of the Three, they being absolutely equal in every particular, might be drafted with impartial propriety for such fancied discrimination. The monotheistic notion, as voiced by Jews, Mohammedans, the Unitarians, is of a God who is one Person; while the Christian's idea is of *One God* who answers every claim of Biblical monotheism, yet subsists in three equal Persons. The Father is not the One God of the Bible any more than is the Son or the Spirit. The Three are *One God*.¹

The Witness of the Apostle John

The Apostle John made it quite clear that it is impossible to worship the Father and to deny the Son at the same time. The "god" worshipped by Jews, Muslims, Unitarians, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Worldwide Church of God, The Way International, the Assemblies of Yahweh, the Millennial Dawn, the Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ, United Pentecostals, etc., is NOT the Father according to I John 2:23:

Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

To make sure that we did not miss this point, John put the proposition in both a negative and positive form:

Negative: Whoever *denies* the Son does not have the Father;

Positive: the one who *confesses* the Son has the Father also.

The notion that all religions worship the Father just under different names is an idea totally foreign and antithetical to the Bible. Only the Trinitarian can truly worship God the Father because only the Trinitarian worships the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Denial of God the Father

The naive assumption that everyone worships God the Father does not take into account the fact that there are religions which deny that God is a "father" in any sense whatsoever or who believe that the "Father" is an exalted man with a male body. The same is true for those who deny that the Father is a separate Person from the Son and the Spirit.

Just as it is possible to preach "another" Jesus, it is also possible to be guilty of preaching "another" Father (II Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:8; Matt. 24:24). Until someone defines what he means by "the Father," it cannot be assumed that he is referring to the first Person of the Holy Trinity.

Today, some of the radicals most powerful attacks on God the Father come from the religion of Islam, from the radical feminist, from liberalism, from Mormonism, and from various other religious movements.

The Error of Islam

Muhammad had the mistaken idea that Christians worshipped three gods—the Father, the Mother, and the Son (Surah 5:73). He assumed that when Christians referred to God as “the Father,” this meant that the Father was an exalted male deity who had a divine consort named Miriam. They had sexual intercourse and she conceived and gave birth to a Son called Jesus.²

Muhammad’s mistake can be traced back to his own pagan religious upbringing. The Meccan god “Allah” was in pre-Islamic times the Moon-god who had the Sun goddess as his female consort. Their sexual intercourse produced the stars who were called the “daughters of Allah.”¹

Since Muhammad was familiar with the concept of a male and female deity creating offspring through sexual intercourse, when he heard Christians say the Jesus was the “Son” of God, he assumed that Mary was the female consort of the Father and that they had produced Jesus through sexual intercourse.

Given his pagan background, Muhammad erroneously assumed that the Trinity was composed of a male and female deity and that Jesus was the fruit of their sexual intercourse. This is why the doctrine of the Trinity is condemned so strongly in the Qur’an.⁴ Many Muslims still think that the doctrine of the Trinity refers to three gods: the Father, the Mother, and the Son.

Christians do not believe that God the Father is a male deity. They do not believe that Mary was his female consort. Neither was Jesus conceived through sexual intercourse. He was supernaturally conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit:

Luke 1:30 And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.

31 “And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

32 “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end.”

34 And Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

35 And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.

Since Islam denies the Son, it does not worship the Father (I John 2:23). Thus, the Muslim god Allah is not God the Father, but a false god of pagan origins.

The Feminist Movement

The most bitter attack against God the Father is found today in the radical feminist movement. Such books as Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father*, Ruth Duck's *Gender and the Name of God*, C. Osiek's *Beyond Anger*, L.M. Russell's *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, Christine Dowling's *The Goddess*, and Adele Getty's *Goddess* have become required reading in many college courses, particularly in women's colleges. There are dozens of feminist books which bitterly attack the Fatherhood of God. They even speak of castrating the Father and turning Him into a Mother goddess!

Joan Chamberlain Englesman in *The Feminine Dimensions of the Divine* (Westminster, 1979) argues that each member of the Trinity should be remolded into female images and that Mary should be added to the Godhead.⁵ To speak of God as Father, according to Mary Daly:

... makes her aware of herself as a stranger, as an outsider, as an alienated person, not as a daughter who belongs or who is appointed to a marvelous destiny. She cannot belong to *this* without asserting to her own lobotomy.⁶

Christian women should find it utterly outrageous that Daly equates worshipping God the Father with having a lobotomy. Men should be outraged when Daly calls for the castration of the Trinity and states that the worship of the Trinity is nothing more than phallicism.⁷

The Origins of the Feminist Movement

The modern radical feminist movement is an outgrowth of Marxist liberation theology. It attempts to liberate women from being "oppressed" by white, European, heterosexual males. This becomes ludicrous when it is realized that the conceptual foundation of modern feminism comes from such white, European, heterosexual males as Hegel, Darwin, Marx, and Lenin.

Since some or many radical feminists feel they must liberate themselves from male dominance in any form, God the Father and the entire Trinity must be either recast in feminine images or rejected all together.

This is why the typical radical feminist today dismisses the Bible as so much "patriarchal claptrap."

In her books, Mary Daly celebrates the death of God the Father because she assumes that in some way His death would liberate women. Of course, she never rationally explains how or in what way killing off God the Father would liberate women.

The Fallacies of Feminism

The arguments advanced by radical feminists are usually built upon certain simple logical fallacies. For example, the argument that the concept of a divine Father is intrinsically psychologically damaging to the female psyche is just as implausible as saying that the concept of a divine Mother is intrinsically psychologically damaging to the male psyche! The same is true for all the male-bashing and stereotyping that sometimes goes on in such books. It is self-refuting to condemn as unethical woman-bashing and stereotyping and then turn around and engage in male-bashing and stereotyping.

One of the foundational *a priori* assumptions of modern radical feminism is the principle of religious relativism in which the word "God" is reduced to a religious symbol which has no revealed meaning and thus no intrinsic meaning. Some claim that the word "God" can mean whatever you want it to mean. God is mother or father, brother or sister, infinite or finite, omnipotent or impotent, etc. It doesn't really matter. There is no "true" as opposed to "false" god.

It is on this basis that radical feminists from time to time put out their own version of the Bible in which they either remove all references to "the Father" or replace it with "Father-Mother" or the "Divine Parent."

The Inherent Hypocrisy

Of course, relativism has always suffered from hypocrisy of the worse sort. After saying that God can be whatever makes you feel happy, feminism turns around and attacks the concept of the Fatherhood of God on the grounds that:

1. it is the product of male aggression,
2. it is psychologically damaging to women and men,
3. it is the cause of wars,
4. it causes violence such as rape.

It would seem that any concept of God is acceptable except the heavenly Father! While Christians today are castigated for worshipping the Triune God of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, radical feminists are applauded for worshipping the Goddess!

What is frustrating when dealing with radical feminists is that when you point out all the logical fallacies and self-refuting statements inherent in their arguments, they respond that the laws of logic were invented by white, European, heterosexual males in order to oppress women.

Witchcraft and Feminism

We congratulate those radical feminists such as Dowell, Brewster, etc., who openly admit that they are pagans and that they practice witchcraft. But we do not appreciate those feminists who pretend to be Christians yet deny the fatherhood of God. It is just as viable as attempting to draw a round square. As Cathrina Halkes puts it:

It is hardly possible to call to mind a single feminist theologian, whatever her phase of development may be, who does not find the image of the Father-God a challenge and a direct confrontation.⁸

Since many radical feminists openly reject God the Father, then we are quite safe in stating that they do not *want* to worship the Father. They want to worship the goddess whose reflection they see at the bottom of the well of their own soul. The goddess is nothing more than woman writ large.

Classic Liberalism

The theology of classic liberalism was developed during the 19th century by German rationalists who believed in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. But Jesus directly contradicted both of these liberal dogmas in John 8:38-44. He stated that we are "the children of wrath by nature" not the children of God (Eph. 2:1-3). Thus, it takes a sovereign act of God's grace to make us His children (Eph. 2:4-10). If we repent of our sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, then and only then do we have the privilege of becoming a child of God (John 1:12-13; Gal. 3:26).

The "Father God" of classical liberalism was only a reflection of the liberal theologians who created him. Their Father was a universalist and a pacifist just like them; He even had the same socio-political views and

even the same taste in music as the liberals who created him! Their Father would not throw anyone into hell anymore than they would. Thus, the "Father God" of classic liberal theology was nothing more than a false god created in their own image and likeness.

Modern Liberalism

Due to the influence of Marxism and the many "isms" it spawned such as feminism and modern liberalism no longer preaches the old liberal doctrines of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Feminists would not stand for such language today.

Modern liberalism has been floundering around for several decades trying to justify its own existence in the face of its *a priori* commitment to religious relativism. If we are to fulfill ourselves psychologically by creating our own god or goddess to satisfy our own unique existential needs, then all views of God are equal. If the liberal professor's or the liberal pastor's view of god is no more valid than our own view, then why should we bother to listen to them?

By throwing out the infallible authority of the Bible, liberalism has actually cut its own throat by undermining the very basis of all organized religion which is authority. If God has not spoken in Scripture, then everything is relative.

Yet, at the same time liberals want to keep their jobs in organized religion. They want people to come to their church and hear their sermons. They want students to attend their classes and hear their lectures. But they also want to tell them that no one knows anything and no one has the answers to the great questions of life. If their students and parishioners had the common sense to take them literally, they would never show up for another lecture or sermon.

In modern liberalism, the words "God the Father" have been reduced to a *functional* phrase describing what God *does* instead of what God *is*. The "deity of Christ" has also been redefined as a functional term which only indicates that Christ functions as a revelation of God. Of course, when they go on to say that trees, birds, flowers, dogs, etc., can also function as a revelation of God, it means that Christ was not God *per se*.

Such liberal writings as Odell-Scott's *A Post-Patriarchal Christology* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1979) naively assumed that there is a radical dichotomy between ontology and functionalism, i.e., between being and action. This is why Neo-orthodox liberals can say the Bible *becomes* the Word of God while denying that it *is* the Word of God. If a verse in the Bible takes on a special meaning to you, then it is functioning at that time as a word from God to you. Of course, the same can be said of any piece

of literature. Even the *New York Times* can become the word of God in this sense.

The Eternal Father

In Trinitarian theology, the first Person of the Trinity is not just the "Father" in a functional sense. He is *ontologically* the Father because He is the eternal Father of the eternal Son. He was always the Father and will continue to be the Father for all eternity. He was never anything less than the Father. Thus, God the Father functions as a Father because He *is* the Father. If every human being ceased to exist, He would still be the Father because He is the eternal Father of the eternal Son.

Action flows from and is based upon being. What God *is* determines what He *does*. We do not have to choose between ontology or functionalism as if they were in an either/or dichotomy. Such liberal dichotomies only reveal the poverty and sterility of modern liberalism. A god who is only a father in a functional sense is not the biblical Father.

God the Father in Arianism

Since the Arians deny the eternity of the Son, they also deny the eternity of God as Father. The Arian deity became a "Father" when he created the Son. Thus, the Arian god is not the same God as the eternal Father of Trinitarian theology. Arians cannot worship the first Person of the Trinity because they deny the Trinity itself. This fundamental fact cannot be ignored.

God the Father in Trinitarian theology was not alone or lonely in eternity past because there was infinite fellowship, communion, and love between the members of the Trinity from all eternity. This is in stark contrast to the Arian deity who was eternally alone with no one to fellowship with or love. No wonder Arians speak of their god creating angels and men because he was lonely and needed someone to talk to and with!

The doctrine of the Trinity is the only way that the self-sufficiency of God can be established on a firm basis. The Triune God was not in need of anything (Acts 17:25). Thus, the creation was not an act of necessity, but of free volition. Since we will deal with Arianism in a later chapter, we now move on to modalism.

The Modalist's Father

The modalistic idea that the Father is not a separate person from the Son is, in the last analysis, a denial of the Father as well as a denial of the Son. God the Father is not just a mask which a modalistic Unitarian deity puts on to play a certain role. Thus, the "Father" worshipped in the United Pentecostal Church and in the Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ is not the Father of Trinitarian theology.

This point is hard for some people to understand because "Jesus Only" cults seem to glorify the Lord Jesus. But this is not the case. When a modalist rejects the Trinity, he is rejecting the biblical Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is now preaching "another" Jesus, "another" Father and "another" Spirit. Since we will deal with Modalism later, suffice it to say, they preach a false Father.

God the Father in Mormonism

Mormonism has been rightly called "the Islam of America." The parallels are indeed striking. Islam is based on the prophet Muhammad and Mormonism on the prophet Joseph Smith. They both claimed to receive divine revelations and they both left behind books which are viewed as being equal to the Bible. Both men practiced polygamy and used violence to promote their religion. And, most importantly, they both made the same mistake of thinking that God the Father was a male deity who through sexual intercourse with Mary sired a Son. The difference being that while Muhammad rejected this gross idea, Smith wholeheartedly embraced it!

Whereas Christianity is monotheistic, Mormonism is blatantly polytheistic. Its polytheism is of the basest sort being composed of billions of male and female deities who are nothing more than exalted men and women.

These finite male and female deities are involved in polygamous unions which through sexual intercourse produce billions of spirit babies who later enter the bodies of infants here on earth and other planets. Good Mormons will be exalted to become gods and goddesses and obtain their own planets one day where they will be worshipped as the gods of that world."

The Adam God Theory

At the beginning, Mormon theology taught that Adam was God the Father. Adam, with one of his wives Eve, came to this planet to populate

it with those who would then worship him as their God. Brigham Young, the second President and living prophet of the Latter Day Saints Church, states:

When our father Adam came into the Garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body and brought Eve, one of his celestial wives, with him. . . . He is our father and our God and the only God with whom we have to do. (*Journal of Discourses*, 1:50).

When the Bible says that Jesus is the Son of God the Father, Mormon theology originally said that it was referring to Adam-God who came to earth and had sexual intercourse with Mary. Thus, it was Adam who impregnated Mary, not the Holy Spirit. Jesus was just as much the son of Adam as were Cain and Abel. Again, Brigham Young says:

Who was the Savior begotten by? . . . Who did beget Him? His Father, and his father is our God, and the father of our spirits, and he is the framer of the body, the God and Father of our Lord of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who is He? He is Father Adam; Michael; the Ancient of Days. Has he a Father? He has. Has he a mother? He has. (Brigham Young, Feb. 19, 1854 . . . Tabernacle . . . Salt Lake City Church Historian Office, call # Ms. F 219 #81, pg. 6).

There are dozens of documents from Mormon history which prove beyond doubt that the early Mormons believed in the Adam-God theory.¹⁰ The Adam-god doctrine of early Mormonism is even canonized in Mormon Scriptures called *Doctrine and Covenants*:

And also with Michael, or Adam, the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days. (Sec. 27:11.)

In the LDS version of *Doctrine and Covenants*, footnote K refers us to Daniel 7:9-14 as the Biblical basis of the doctrine that Adam is the "Ancient of Days," i.e., God. This note is still found in Mormon "Scripture" to this day.

Modern Mormon Denials

Most modern Mormons have never heard of this early Mormon doctrine. They will deny that the Church of the Latter Day Saints ever

taught this doctrine because it does not teach it today. But the documentation for the Adam-god doctrine is so overwhelming that it can only be denied, but never refuted.

While the Adam-God theory is no longer taught today, the humanity of God the Father is still a tenet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Saints:

God himself was once as we are now and is now an exalted man. (Journal of Discourses, I:50)

The Father has a body of flesh and bone as tangible as man's. (Doctrine & Covenants, 130:22)

Remember that God our Heavenly Father was perhaps once a child and mortal like we are and rose step by step in the scale of progress, in the school of advancement; has moved forward and overcome until He had arrived at the point where He now is. (Journal of Discourses, I:123)

Richard Hopkins, a modern Mormon apologist, states:

God the Father is also an immortal being with a glorified body of flesh and bones.¹¹

If God is the Father of humans . . . then God too must be human!¹²

The fact is that God, as taught in the Old and New Testament, is a Man, or more precisely, a perfect and glorified Human Being.¹³

Hopkins' argument that if God created human beings, then he must also be a human being is logically absurd. Since God was the "father" of the animals, does this mean that he is an animal?

What are the logical implications of the Mormon position? If the Father is an exalted man, then there must also be a divine Mother who, as his sexual consort, is an exalted woman.¹⁴ They, in turn, had a father and mother who also had a father and a mother. This, of course, ends in an infinite regression of gods and goddesses.

No Omni-Attributes

Since the heavenly Father and Mother are glorified human beings, they are limited by their physical body. Thus, Mormonism denies the infinite omni-attributes of God. For example, Hopkins rejects the omnipresence of God:

If God is present at every point in the Universe simultaneously, one could easily conclude that God is in everything and that everything is God. . . . This kind of omnipresence is absolutely contrary to biblical teaching.¹⁵

Since the Mormon Father is limited to a finite body, he is not everywhere in the universe at the same time. While the Father according to Mormonism is aware of and can travel around the universe, he is not omnipresent:

God is bodily in one place at any one moment of real space-time. . . . He is continually aware of everything that is happening everywhere in the universe, and can communicate, and travel to, any spot instantaneously.¹⁶

All the other omni-attributes of God are either denied outright or redefined in such a way that they end in self-contradiction. Since the Father himself had a Father and Mother, then he is not eternal but had a beginning. Neither is he immortal, perfect or immutable. He was born as a baby and went on to become an adult who is now exalted to divinity.¹⁷

Enough has been cited to demonstrate that Mormons do not believe in or worship the heavenly Father of the Bible. Their belief in billions of finite gods and goddesses and that they themselves will join their ranks, is one of many reasons they are labeled as a non-Christian cult.¹⁸

The Father in the Word Faith Movement

It will come as a surprise to many people that some of the well known prosperity preachers of the later part of the twentieth century believed, like the Mormons, that God the Father was a *man*. This is due in part to the influence of *Dake's Annotated Reference Bible*. It states:

All 3 persons have their own personal body, soul and spirit and make the divine Trinity.¹⁹

The Mormons taught that the Holy Spirit was not an exalted man, but spirit in nature. But Dake gives a body, soul, and spirit to the Holy Spirit as well as to the Father and to the Son! He ends up with three men who compose the Trinity. This is tritheism and not the Trinity.

Another prosperity preacher, commenting on the nature of God the Father, states that:

He is very much like you and me. [He is] a being who stands somewhere around 6'2," and weighs somewhere in the neighborhood of a couple of hundred pounds, little better, and has a hand [span] of nine inches across.²⁰

What does this mean? It means that the Word Faith movement is preaching "another" Father. The "Father" they worship is no more the first Person of the Trinity than the man in the moon. They must be classed along with the Mormons as preaching a false Father.

If this is not bad enough, some prosperity preachers have taught that we are "little gods." Walter Martin comments:

Earl Paulk, Charles Capps, Robert Tilton, Kenneth Copeland, and Kenneth E. Hagin are among the leading televangelists who espouse the "little gods" teaching.²¹

To teach that we *are* gods goes even beyond the Mormons who believe that they will *become* gods. The supporting documentation is so extensive that there can no doubt on this point.²²

Black Muslims

The Nation of Islam, founded by Wallace D. Fard and brought into national prominence by Elijah Muhammad, Malcom X, and Louis Farakhan, teaches that Allah is a black man.

Following in the footsteps of Father Divine, —a black man who during the Depression claimed to be God—Farakhan claims that there are really twenty-four black men who are the gods of this dimension. Both Wallace Fard and Elijah Muhammed have been called Allah or God.

The Christian God is mocked and rejected as a "spook." The black Muslims claim that they want a "real" God, one with a black body just like theirs. Since they believe in many gods and that all black men are gods by virtue of their color, the Black Muslims are not truly Muslims in any sense. The Nation of Islam is a racist religion based on hate and intolerance of the worst kind.²³

What is decidedly hypocritical is that the Black Muslims teach that all white people are devils and that the whites were not created by Allah but by another black god/man named YaKub; they fail to tell their followers that Wallace D. Fard was a white man! Thus, the Nation of Islam was founded by a white devil whom they call "Master," Believe it or not!

From the above examples, it is clear that not everyone believes in God the Father. The Muslims and the feminists deny the Father outright. The liberals and the cults preach "another" Father, i.e., a false Father.

The Personhood of the Father

There are over three hundred references to the "Father" in the New Testament. If this "Father" is a person, and not just an impersonal force like electricity, then what kinds of things should we expect to find in the New Testament? What must be in order for what is to be what it is?

The Trinitarian begins with the *a priori* assumption that the Father is a Person. Thus, he expects to find in the New Testament that the Father will manifest the attributes of personhood, i.e. this "Father" will say and do those things which only a person can say and do. And what do we find when we open the New Testament?

The Father knows (Matt. 6:8, 32), speaks (Matt. 3:17), sees (Matt. 6:4,6), loves or hates (I John 3:1), wills (Matt. 7:21), gives or does not give (Matt. 7:11), reveals or hides (Matt. 11:25), is or is not pleased (Mark 1:11), forgives or does not forgive (Matt. 6:15-16), sends (I John 4:14), etc. None of these activities can be done by a rock or by electricity. How can a rock forgive you of your sins? These passages clearly prove the personhood of the Father.

The Trinitarian is also not surprised to find that the Father is usually referred to by masculine pronouns such as "He," "His," and "Him" (Matt. 5:45, etc.). The use of the neuter singular "what" in reference to the Father in John 4:22 is not sufficient to overthrow the personhood of the Father. He is clearly being referred to as an *object* of worship. Hence the use of the neuter instead of the masculine.

One particular text that demonstrates the personhood of the Father beyond all doubt is 1 John 1:3:

... what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed *our fellowship is with the Father*, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

ὁ ἐωράκαμεν καὶ ἀκηκόαμεν, ἀπαγγέλλομεν καὶ
ὑμῖν, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς κοινωνίαν ἔχητε μεθ' ἡμῶν. καὶ
ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ
τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

The word κοινωνία “fellowship” appears twice in this verse and also in verses 6 and 7. It is found twenty times in the New Testament. In his classic commentary on I John, John Lias points out that *fellowship* is:

one of the most important words in the New Testament. It is therefore essential that it should be fully understood.²⁴

The word “fellowship” usually describes a mutually uplifting communication on spiritual things which takes place in the midst of believers as they encourage each other in the things of God (Acts 2:42). It refers to an edifying discussion of what is held in common by the people of God such as the grace and gifts of God.²⁵

First John 1:3 reveals that is also possible to commune with the Father even as we commune with each other. The Greek text brings this out clearly.

Notice, first of all, that the preposition μετὰ is used three times. It is first used in reference to the fellowship of the saints and then to their fellowship with the Father and then to their fellowship with the Son.

This means that fellowshiping with the Father and with the Son cannot be reduced to believers talking *about* the Father or the Son as they commune with each other. The Greek grammar is clear that the saints are actually communing with (μετὰ) the Father and with (μετὰ) the Son in addition to and separate from their fellowshiping with (μετὰ) each other.

Secondly, notice that the repetition of the preposition μετὰ reveals that just as the disciples and the Father are separate persons, the Father is not the same person as the Son. Greek scholars have pointed out that on the basis of Greek grammar, if the Father and the Son were one person, the word μετὰ would only be used once.²⁶ But its use a second time reveals that John considered the Son a separate person from the Father.²⁷

This grammar of this passage clearly demonstrates the personhood of the Father. It is impossible to fellowship with electricity or with a stone. Just as human fellowship requires more than one person, the same is true with our fellowship with the Father. Through the grace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, we can truly fellowship with the Father (Eph. 2:18).

Not a Human Person

To say that the Father is a Person as opposed to being an impersonal force or object does not mean that He is a *human* person, i.e., a man. Just as the angels are persons, but not men, the Father is a Person and not a man. Just as angels are spiritual in nature and do not have a physical body (Heb. 1:14; Luke 24:39), the Father is spiritual in nature and does not have a physical body.

That this is true is seen from two arguments. First, the Bible explicitly *denies* that the Father is a man. And, second, the Bible explicitly teaches that the Father is *spirit* in nature.

Explicit Denials

The Bible makes it very clear that God is not a man in the following passages:

Numbers 23:19

“God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

לֹא אִישׁ אֵל וְיִכְזֹב וּבֶן־אָדָם וַיִּתְּנָהּ נֹא
אָמַר וְלֹא יַעֲשֶׂה וְדָבָר וְלֹא יִקְיֶמְנָה:

In the context, in order to emphasize the immutability of God's decrees, Balaam states that God will not change His mind about blessing Israel because He is not a אִישׁ “man.” The word אִישׁ generally refers to the *male* human being as opposed to the female human being (i.e., Gen. 2:23). Girdlestone states that:

its usage is very plain, and is illustrated by the fact that the LXX renders it by ἀνὴρ in about 1083 passages, and by ἄνθρωπος only 450 times. Ish is rightly translated a man as contrasted with a woman; a husband as contrasted with a wife.²⁸

Balaam literally said, “God is not a male human being.” Those who teach that God is a male human being, such as the Mormons, are clearly in direct contradiction of what Balaam said.

Balaam then added וְכִנּוּם וּבֶן־אָדָם “neither is He a son of man.” But instead of using the word אִישׁ, Balaam now uses the word אָדָם which refers to human beings as opposed to animals. It is the generic term for humanity. This is also a direct contradiction of those who teach that the Father was born of human parents and became a god after being exalted. God the Father is not a male human being and neither was he sired by human beings.

1 Samuel 15:29

“And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind;
for *He is not a man* that He should change His mind.”

נִצַּח יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִשְׁקַר וְלֹא יִנָּחֵם כִּי לֹא אָדָם הוּא לְהִנָּחֵם:
וְנִם

Samuel was clearly familiar with Numbers 23:19 and used the same argument Balaam advanced. God does not change His mind like human beings do because He is not a human being. He uses the word אָדָם to emphasize the generic sense of human beings.

Job 9:32

“For *He is not a man* as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together.”

כִּי־לֹא־אִישׁ כָּמוֹנִי אֶעֱנֶנּוּ נָבֹא יַחְדָּו בַּמִּשְׁפָּט:

Job complains that he and God are not on equal footing because God is not an אִישׁ, i.e., a male human being. Thus, the contest between Job and God was not a “man to man” situation because God is not a man.

Isaiah 31:3

Now the Egyptians are men, and not God, And their horses are flesh and not spirit; So the LORD will stretch out His hand, and he who helps will stumble and he who is helped will fall, and all of them will come to an end together.

אָדָם וְלֹא־אֵל וְסוֹסֵיהֶם בָּשָׂר וְלֹא־רוּחַ וַיִּהְיֶה יָטָה יָדוֹ
וְכָשָׁל עֹזֵר וְנָפַל עֹזֵר וַיַּחֲדּוּ כָּל־סוֹכְלֵיהֶם: וּמִצָּרֵיהֶם

Why should Israel call upon God to help them instead of the Egyptians? Isaiah points out that the Egyptians are only אָדָם, i.e., human beings, while God is not a human being. E. J. Young comments:

Egypt is a man and not God. The distinction is metaphysical, designed to set forth the difference between the Creator and the creature. For this reason the term 'el rather than 'elohim is used. Whereas 'elohim might in certain instances denote beings that were actually creatures, this is not true of 'el.²⁹

The grammar of the Hebrew text is significant because there are two contrasting parallels in the verse:

אָדָם (man) vs אֵל (God)
בָּשָׂר (flesh) vs רוּחַ (spirit)

Just as *flesh* is different in nature from *spirit*, *God* is different in nature from *man*. He is not a human being like the Egyptians. Nothing could be clearer.

Hosea 11:9

I will not execute My fierce anger; I will not destroy Ephraim again. For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.

לֹא אֶעֱשֶׂה חֲרוֹן אַפִּי לֹא אָשׁוּב לְשַׁחַת אֶפְרַיִם כִּי אֵל
אֲנִי וְלֹא-אִישׁ בְּקִרְבִּי קְדוֹשׁ וְלֹא אָבוֹא בְעִיר:

In this passage God Himself states that He is not a אִישׁ, i.e., a human male, but God by nature. The assumption is that if אֵל is a man, then He cannot be God and if He is God, then He cannot be a man.

The last text we will examine is Matthew 16:17:

And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because *flesh and blood* did not reveal this to you, *but My Father who is in heaven*.

No mere mortal human being (i.e., "flesh and blood") ever revealed to Peter that Jesus was the Messiah. It was the Father in heaven who revealed the deity of Jesus to Peter.

The phrase “flesh and blood” refers to the mortal or “natural” man before the resurrection (I Cor. 15:50). Since the Father cannot be “flesh and blood” according to Matthew 16:17, then He cannot be a mortal man. It is impossible to avoid the contrast between “flesh and blood” and the Father.

Spiritual Nature of the Father

The final antidote to the idea that the Father is a man is the biblical teaching on the spiritual nature of the Father. In John 4, we find a discussion between Jesus and a Samaritan woman. In this discussion the spiritual nature of the Father is emphasized:

John 4:23 “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

24 “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

πνεῦμα ὁ θεός, καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας αὐτὸν ἐν
πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ δεῖ προσκυνεῖν.

Jesus said, πνεῦμα ὁ θεός “God is spirit.” In the Latin we read, “spiritus est Deus.” In terms of the Greek grammar of the phrase, the Greek grammarians Rienecker and Rogers point out:

The predicate without the article emphasizes the character and nature (John 1:1).³⁰

Since πνεῦμα does not have an article, Jesus was saying that the Father is spirit in nature as opposed to being flesh in nature. Hendriksen comments:

The necessity for distinctly *spiritual* worship is rooted in the very being of God: **God is Spirit**. In the original (πνεῦμα ὁ θεός) the subject, God, stands last and is preceded by the article. The predicate, Spirit, is the first word of the sentence, and is not preceded by the article. . . . The predicate is placed first for the sake of emphasis: *completely spiritual* in his essence is God!³¹

In the Greek language, if you wanted to emphasize a certain word, you would take it out of its normal place in the word order of the sentence and put it first at the head of the sentence. The reader would then know that when he read the sentence out loud, he was to raise his voice when he came to that word. If we spoke verse 24 in this manner we would say, "God is **SPIRIT!**"

Notice that the text does not say that the Father *has* a spirit as some Mormons have claimed.³² No, the text is quite clear that the Father *is* spirit.

Since the Father is clearly not a "flesh and blood" mortal man according to Matt. 16:17, some Mormons have tried to argue that the Father is not a "flesh and blood" man but a glorified "flesh and bones" man.³³ The phrase "flesh and bones" is found only once in the Bible.

"See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see,
for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."
(Luke 24:39)

The point Jesus was making to His disciples was that He was not a "spirit" in nature but "flesh and bones" in nature, i.e., He now had a glorified body. Since Jesus contrasted "spirit" to "flesh and bones," the Father according to John 4:24 cannot have a glorified human body anymore than He can have a mortal human body according to Matthew 16:17. Either way He cannot be reduced to being a man.

The Invisible God

In our earlier exegesis of John 1:18, we demonstrated that no one has ever seen the heavenly Father. The biblical reason that no one has ever seen Him is not that He is hiding from man, as some Mormons have suggested. Instead, the Bible clearly states that the Father is *invisible* in nature, i.e., He is not capable of being seen by human eyes. While invisibility is an attribute of a spirit, it is not an attribute of a male body, glorified or not.

Colossians 1:15

And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.

ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, πρωτότοκος
πάσης κτίσεως,

The presence of the article τοῦ before ἀοράτου means that Paul is emphasizing the invisible nature of the Father in contrast to the visible nature of Jesus Christ. He is "God the *Invisible* One" (Lenski, Wuest, etc.). That the phrase "Invisible One" is a title of deity is clear from its use in Hebrew 11:27.

The Greek word ἀοράτου means that the Father is "not capable of being seen, invisible."³⁴ His very essence or nature is "invisible" according to Rom. 1:20. The Father is worshipped as the "invisible" King (1 Tim. 1:17) Thus, the idea that the Father *can* be seen by human eyes, but does not choose to be seen, is refuted by use of the Greek word ἀοράτου.

The Deity of the Father

Now that we have established that the Father is a person distinct from the Son, we must ask if the Father is divine. Given the evidence from the Old Testament and the early Jewish literature, the Trinitarian is warranted in beginning with the *a priori* assumption that the authors of the New Testament believed that the Father is God. The Jewish context of the New Testament clearly favors the Trinitarian *a priori*.

What must be in order for what is to be what it is? If the Father is God, then what kind of things should we expect to find in the New Testament?

1. The names of God will be applied to the Father in the New Testament:

- A. The word θεός "God" is used of the Father in such places as Galatians 1:1; Philemon 2:11; I Peter 1:2; II John 1:3; Jude 1, etc. As with the English word "God," the Greek word θεός had become the generic term for any and all gods. Thus the authors of the New Testament could refer to the Father as θεός and also use θεός to refer to Satan in II Corinthians 4:4 and to the idols of the heathen in I Corinthians 8:5.

But while the idols *functioned* as gods to the heathen, the New Testament makes it abundantly clear that they were not *ontologically* God "by nature" (Gal. 4:8). According to the Apostle Paul, the gods of the heathen are actually demons (I Cor. 10:20). The mere fact that the word θεός is used for false gods does not logically imply that it cannot be used for the true God.

- B. The word κύριος "Lord" is found 719 times in the New Testament. It is clearly applied to the Father in such places as

Matthew 4:7; 5:33; 11:25; 21:9; Mark 12:36; Acts 4:26; 7:49;
II Corinthians 6:18; Hebrews 12:5-6, etc.

We recognize that the word κύριος is sometimes used in the New Testament in the sense of "Sir" and does not automatically imply the deity of the person so addressed (i.e., Mark 13:35). But the secular use of κύριος does not logically mean that it was not used as a divine title for God. This is particularly true when κύριος stands for יהוה "Yahweh" in an Old Testament citation. In such instances the following rule applies: When κύριος in the New Testament is the equivalent of יהוה in the Old Testament, the divine usage cannot be denied or weakened.

Psalms 118:26 says, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of יהוה [Yahweh]." This passage is quoted in the New Testament in Matthew 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; 19:38; and John 12:13.

Since the OT Hebrew text has יהוה and the NT Greek text has κύριος, then the יהוה of Psalms 118:26 has to be the κύριος of Matthew 21:9. And since the phrase "in the name of the Lord" in Matthew 21:9 refers to the name of the Father, He must be the יהוה of Psalms 118:26. The deity of the Father is established by the New Testament's use of κύριος.

2. The attributes of the Father reveal His deity:

The Father is described as eternal (Rom. 1:20; 16:26; I Tim. 6:16), omnipotent (Rev. 19:6), immortal (I Tim. 1:17), omniscient (Matt. 6:32), Holy (I Pet. 1:15), heavenly (Matt. 6:14), perfect (Matt. 5:48), and true deity (John 17:3), etc.

First John 1:3 once again becomes highly significant. The *fact* that we can fellowship with the Father not only demonstrates His Personhood but also demonstrates His divinity.

The Apostle John clearly assumed that *all* believers in *all* places at *all* times in *all* generations under *all* circumstances can fellowship with the Father who is in heaven. This is possible only if the Father is eternal, immortal, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, etc. In other words, the Father *must* be God in order for fellowship with Him to be possible.

3. He does the works of God: creation (Heb. 2:10), sovereignty (Matt. 11:25), providence (Matt. 5:45; 6:26), and salvation (Eph. 1:4).

4. His words are the words of God: Romans 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:1-2.

5. He is worshipped as God: How? By our prayers and praise in which we offer our faith, hope, love, and obedience to Him (Matt. 5:16; 6:9-13; John 4:23-24; Eph. 3:14; Phil. 4:20; Rev. 4:9-11, etc.)

Once again I John 1:3 becomes significant. The *substance* of our fellowship with the Father reveals His deity as well as His personhood. *How* do we fellowship with the Father? By talking to Him in our prayers; by extolling Him in our worship; by listening to His Word; by obeying His law; by giving Him our ultimate faith, hope, love, trust, confidence, and praise; by honoring Him as our Creator and Sovereign Lord, etc. If the Father is not deity, then our fellowshiping with Him would be the grossest kind of idolatry.

Possible Objections

One possible objection is: How can the Father be God when He never directly claimed to be God in the New Testament? Since the Father never said, "I am God," how then can He be God?

We freely admit that in the New Testament the Father never said, "I am God." But this is no more or less than an argument from silence which proves nothing. In fact the "silence" can be understood as further proof that the deity of the Father was not an controversy because everyone accepted it. Thus, even though the Father never said, "I am God," this does not negate the fact that the Father is called God and is worshipped as God by the authors of the New Testament.

Furthermore, on what grounds is it assumed that the Father has to say the words, "I am God," in order to be God? The assumption that in order for someone to be God, He must say, "I am God" is without logical or scriptural merit.

Another possible objection is: How can the Father be God when He called Jesus "God" in Hebrews 1:8 and addressed Him as the "Yahweh" of Psalms 102:1, 25-27 in Hebrews 1:10-12?

Instead of being an argument against the deity of the Father, the fact that the Father calls Jesus "God" (Heb. 1:8) is further proof of the Trinity. It is no more surprising than when Jesus called the Father "God" (Mark 15:34). Since all the members of the Trinity are God, they can refer to each other as God. The Trinitarian has no problem with this situation.

Conclusion

The Father is a divine Person and not just a metaphor for divine power. He thinks, plans, feels, chooses, saves, and damns. He is a distinct Person from the Son and He is to be worshipped as the divine Lord of heaven and earth.

Notes

1. Lewis Sperry Chafer, "Trinitarianism" *Bibletheca Sacra* (vol. 97, 1940), 262-263.
2. Robert A. Morey, *Islamic Invasion* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1992), 152-154.
3. Robert A. Morey, *The Moon-god Allah in the Archeology of the Middle East* (Newport: Research and Education Foundation, 1994).
4. Surahs 2:116; 6:100-101; 10:68; 16:57; 19:35; 23:91; 37:149, 157; 43:16-19, etc.
5. For an interesting discussion of this book, see John Dart, "Balancing Out The Trinity: The Genders of the Godhead," (*Christian Century*, Feb. 1983, 147ff.).
6. Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1973), 20.
7. *Ibid.*, 98f.
8. Cathrina Halkes, "The Themes of Protest in Feminist Theology Against God the Father," in J.B. Metz and E. Schillebeeckx, eds., *God as Father* (New York: Concilium, 1973), 103.
9. For a discussion of this point see: Robert A. Morey, *Battle of the Gods* (Southbridge, Mass: Crowne, 1989), 29-40. In my debate with the Mormon apologist Richard Hopkins, he admitted that he and his wife would become gods, get their own planet to populate, and be worshipped as the gods of that world! For tapes of this debate, write R.E.F., P.O. Box 250, Newport, PA 17074.
10. For a full list of citations, write to the Research and Education Foundation, P. O. Box 250, Newport, PA 17074.
11. Richard R. Hopkins, *Biblical Mormonism* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon, 1994), 55.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, 57.
14. *Ibid.*, 52.

15. Ibid., 58.
16. Ibid., 58.
17. Ibid., 60.
18. Robert A. Morey, *How to Answer a Mormon* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1980).
19. *Dake's Annotated Reference Bible* (Lawrenceville, GA: Dake, 1963), 55, col. 3, paragraph #7.
20. Kenneth Copeland, "Spirit , Soul, and Holy Spirit," part I, audio tape #01-0601, side #1.
21. *The Agony of Deceit*, ed. Michael Horton (Chicago: Moody, 1990), 90.
22. See the many citations given by Martin in the book above.
23. For a full discussion of their doctrine of God, see Robert A. Morey, *Islamic Invasion* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1992).
24. John James Lias, *An Exposition of The First Epistle of John* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1982), 21-22.
25. For discussions of *χοινωνία*, see: *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. W. F. Arndt and F.W.A. Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963), 439-440; Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 104-108; and James Morgan and Samuel Cox, *The Epistles of John* (Minneapolis: 1982), 11-15.
26. Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1968) IV:424 and John James Lias, 22-23.
27. The use of the double meta to indicate separate persons is seen in such places as Romans 12:15.
28. Robert Baker Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 49.
29. E. J. Young, *Isaiah*, 2:375-376.
30. Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 227.

31. William Hendriksen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (London: Banner of Truth, 1964), 168. All the standard commentaries on John agree with Hendriksen.

32. Hopkins, 56.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Rienecker and Rogers, 567.

Chapter Seventeen

God The Son

The identity of Jesus of Nazareth has always been controversial. During His lifetime there were many conflicting views as to who He really was. During the early years of the Church, there were many conflicting views of Jesus. Thus, we should not be surprised that there are many conflicting views today.

The Trinitarian begins with the *a priori* assumption that there is only one true view of Jesus which does justice to all the Biblical material. All the other views are false or heretical. This is in sharp contrast to the naive relativism that dominates most of Western education today. Most people assume that any and all views of Jesus are valid as long as they give some kind of psychological fulfillment.

This reveals that while the Trinitarian looks outside of himself to the Bible for confirmation of his doctrines, modern liberals look within themselves for some kind of emotional confirmation. We are once again back to the issue of whether we begin with God or man. Is God the measure of all things or is man the measure of all things? Trinitarians follow the example of Scripture by beginning where it begins: "In the beginning God . . ." (Gen. 1:1).

If the authors of the New Testament believed that Jesus was both God and man at the same time, how would they express that idea in the Greek language of their day? What words would they use to describe the person and work of Christ? We expect to find that the Son will be described as both Creator and creature; God of very God and man of very man.

The anti-Trinitarians begin with the *a priori* assumption that the authors of the New Testament did not believe that Jesus was divine. If their assumptions are valid, then we would not expect to find passages in the New Testament which describe Jesus as true deity. To them Jesus was only a carpenter or a prophet. Is this the view of Jesus found in the New Testament?

Jesus the Carpenter

Those who grew up with Jesus in Nazareth assumed that He was, like his "father" Joseph, a carpenter. And, of course, for most of His life Jesus

was a carpenter by trade. But to assert that He was *only* a carpenter is an illustration of what is called a “secular” or naturalistic view of Jesus.

If, as some modern liberals assert, Jesus never claimed to be anything more than a simple carpenter, then how can they explain all the opposition Jesus encountered in Nazareth?

Mark 6:2 And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?

3 “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?” And they took offense at Him.

4 And Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his home town and among his own relatives and in his own household.”

The opposition Jesus faced in Nazareth was generated by His powerful sermons, wonderful miracles, and astounding claims. If, as some modern secularists assert, Jesus did not claim to be anything more than a carpenter, if He did not do any miracles, and if He did not speak those sermons attributed to Him in the Gospels, then why did people get so upset? Why all the opposition? Obviously, He was more than a mere carpenter.

Jesus the Rabbi

Nicodemus addressed Jesus as “Rabbi” and identified Him as a “teacher:”

This man came to Him by night, and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher.” (John 3:2a)

Some modern Jews now accept that Jesus was one of the greatest Jewish Rabbis who ever lived. But how could the Rabbi Jesus generate so much hatred and rage from His fellow rabbis? Why all the later harsh Talmudic statements against Him? (see our Appendix on this) If the Rabbi Jesus never said or did anything to get anyone mad, why all the fuss?

When we consider the constant opposition Jesus encountered and the fact of His crucifixion, it is extremely unlikely that Jesus was just a simple Jewish Rabbi who never said or did anything to generate such opposition.

Jesus the Miracle Worker

Nicodemus went on to state that Jesus was more than a simple Jewish Rabbi because Jesus was able to do “signs,” which was one of three biblical words denoting miracles (signs, wonders, miracles).

... “for no one can do these *signs* that You do unless God is with him.” (John 3:2b)

In Nicodemus’ view, Jesus was a great teacher and a miracle worker, which is true. He was the greatest teacher and miracle worker who ever lived. But to say that He was *only* a teacher or a miracle worker is not true. This is why the rest of the chapter stresses that the Father sent His Son to be the Savior of the world (John 3:16). The apostle John is clearly elevating Jesus from Rabbi to the Son of God and from miracle worker to the Savior of the world.

Jesus the Moralist

It is just as unlikely that Jesus was a simple moralist who spoke only of loving one’s neighbor as yourself. Who could get mad at that kind of Jesus? Thus, any “Jesus” who would not sufficiently generate enough fear, hatred, and anger to lead to several assassination attempts culminating in His crucifixion, cannot be the historical Jesus.

The intensity of the hatred generated against Jesus cannot be minimized. Just reading the following passages is sufficient to reveal that He was not an ordinary man:

But the Pharisees went out, and counseled together against Him, as to *how they might destroy Him*. (Matt. 12:14)

Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread was two days off; and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth, and *kill Him*. (Mark 14:1)

And all in the synagogue were *filled with rage* as they heard these things; and they rose up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to *throw Him down the cliff*. (Luke 4:28-29)

And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might *put Him to death*. (Luke 22:2)

Therefore they *picked up stones to throw at Him*; (John 8:59)

So from that day on they planned together *to kill Him*. (John 11:53)

All the modern secular views maintain that the "real" Jesus did nothing miraculous, did not preach the sermons or parables attributed to Him in the Gospels, and never claimed to be the Messiah or God incarnate. The "Jesus" they are left with after they have stripped him of anything miraculous is so anemic and pale that the crucifixion becomes an enigma.

Even more to the point, a secular "Jesus" who was a simple Jew is not only unworthy of our ultimate faith and love is a bore. Such a "Jesus" could not have commanded the allegiance of the kind of men and women who have willingly lived and died for Him throughout the centuries. Obviously, the historical Jesus was more than a carpenter, a Rabbi, a teacher, a miracle worker, or a moralist.

The Prophet Jesus

Just as there were those who held a secular view of Jesus, there were those who thought He was more than a carpenter. He was not an ordinary man, but someone special. In Matthew 16:13-14, Jesus asked His disciples an important question. Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea:

Matt. 16:13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."

Because Jesus was obviously more than a carpenter or mere Rabbi, different explanations arose as to who Jesus really was. Some thought He was John the Baptist who had been resurrected after being beheaded. Even King Herod thought this was a possibility:

Matt. 14:1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the news about Jesus,

2 and said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead; and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

Others thought Jesus was the "Elijah" whose coming was prophesied in Malachi 4:5-6. Or, perhaps He was a resurrected prophet, such as Jeremiah or one of the other prophets. But whoever He was, He was a great prophet:

When therefore the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is of a truth the Prophet who is to come into the world." (John 6:14)

That Jesus was a prophet is true. As the only mediator between God and man (I Tim. 2:5), Jesus is the great prophet whose coming was predicted in Deuteronomy 18:18-19 (cf. Acts 3:17-26).

Despite his abysmal ignorance of the Bible, even Muhammad understood that Jesus was a great prophet (Sura. 19:30). But while Muhammad correctly believed that Jesus was more than a carpenter, he failed to understand that Jesus was more than a mere prophet.

The Messiah, the Son of God

After Jesus asked the disciples what people were saying about Him, He asked them a direct question:

Matt. 16:15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"
16 And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Peter's statement reveals that Jesus was more than a prophet as well as more than a carpenter, Rabbi, teacher or miracle worker. In fact, Jesus was the long awaited Messiah who was the divine Son of God. No wonder Jesus went on to identify Peter's confession of faith as the rock on which the Christian Church was founded:

Matt. 16:17 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.
18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.

Peter's understanding of the person and work of Jesus was not just his personal opinion. The knowledge that Jesus was the Messiah, the divine Son of God, was revealed to him by God the Father in heaven.

This is the fatal flaw in most secular views of Jesus. Because a secularized Jesus would have never been accused of blasphemy, how can they explain all the opposition Jesus encountered, particularly the charge of blasphemy? (Matt. 26:63-68; John 5:17-18; 8:58-59; 10:30-33) They can't.

Another Jesus

Even after Jesus' resurrection, people continued to develop false views of who He was. The Apostle Paul warned the Corinthians that there were "false apostles" who were actually the ministers of Satan who preached "another Jesus" who was different from the One revealed in Scripture and in the Gospel.

II Cor. 11:3 But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

4 For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.

εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν κηρύσσει
ὃν οὐκ ἐκηρύξαμεν, ἢ πνεῦμα ἕτερον λαμβάνετε ὃ
οὐκ ἐλάβετε, ἢ εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον ὃ οὐκ ἐδέξασθε,
καλῶς ἀνέχεσθε.

II Cor. 11:13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

15 Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds.

Paul condemned anyone who preached ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν "another Jesus." Paul used the word ἄλλον to deny that there can be more than one Jesus. *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* explains that:

when the existence of ἄλλος is denied, then another, a second, or additional persons or things of the same rank or nature are excluded. . . . The existence or even theoretical possibility of additional things or person of a particular kind, of something identical or of the same nature or worth is denied. . . . According to John 15:24 no other, no second one exists who could have accomplished the deeds performed by Jesus. According to Acts 4:12 salvation is in no other one. Paul makes the same claim for the gospel which he preaches. Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church, laid in the proclamation; no one can lay any other (1 Cor. 3:11). There is no other gospel than that of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:6).¹

The Greek word ἄλλων means that not all views of Jesus are created equal. There is only one view which can be true and all the others must be false. There is only one true view of Jesus—the One found within the pages of Scripture.

Paul goes on to condemn those who preach ἄλλων Ἰησοῦν “another Jesus” as being motivated by ἡ πνεῦμα ἕτερον “a different spirit” and being guilty of preaching ἡ εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον “a different Gospel.”

The use of ἕτερον (different) instead of ἄλλος (another) is sometimes merely stylish. Weiss explains:

As was the case already in pre-NT Greek, the NT uses ἄλλος and ἕτερος interchangeably with no difference in meaning. This is conspicuous in Gal. 1:6f and enumerations such as Matt. 16:14; 1 Cor. 12:8-10, etc.²

In his commentary, Philip Hughes points out:

In the sequence ἄλλων Ἰησοῦν . . . ἡ πνεῦμα ἕτερον . . . ἡ εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον the change from ἄλλος to ἕτερος is marked in our English version, which reads: “another Jesus . . . a different spirit . . . a different gospel.” In its strict sense ἕτερος means “the other (of two)”; but where the context does not support this precise sense ἕτερος is indistinguishable in meaning from ἄλλος and the two terms may be used interchangeably, as seems to be the case here (see Moulton and Milligan and Arndt and Gingrich *sub* ἕτερος.³)

The idea that any view of Jesus is “OK” as long as it is sincerely held and makes people happy is totally foreign to the New Testament. Any

view of Jesus not found in Scripture must be condemned as “another Jesus.”

Antichrists

The Apostle John was also quite severe in his condemnation of those who preached “another Jesus.” Anyone who denies that Jesus was the Messiah is an antichrist:

Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. (I John 2:22)

Τίς ἐστὶν ὁ ψεύστης εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀρνούμενος ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ Χριστός; οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν.

To deny the Messiahhood of Jesus was to deny that He was the divine Son of God. To deny that He was the divine Son of God was to deny the Fatherhood of God. In his commentary on John's Epistles, Professor I. Howard Marshall, Senior Lecturer in New Testament Exegesis at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, explains:

From verse 9 it is, however, clear that he believed that a false view of the person of Jesus destroyed the possibility of a religious relationship with God. From I John it is apparent that for the elder “Christ” and “Son of God” were virtually synonymous; hence a denial that Jesus was the Christ was a denial that God's Son had truly become incarnate and revealed the love of God by dying as an atoning sacrifice for sin. The historical basis of Christian faith was thus removed.⁴

Morgan and Cox in their classic commentary point out that:

It is observable that, in treating of truth and error, the whole subject of the apostle is concerning Jesus Christ. He assumes that if our views of Him are correct, so will be our apprehension of the whole circle of truth; but that if they be erroneous, we shall not rightly perceive any other truth.⁵

Those who deny the pre-existence of Jesus and His incarnation are false prophets and antichrists according to I John 4:1-3:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

John warns the Elect Lady not to invite anyone to preach in her house church who does not hold to the orthodox doctrine of Christ. Anyone who preaches another view of Jesus is a deceiver and an antichrist:

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds. (II John 7-11)

Prof. Marshall comments:

We should, however, pause to note that for John the height of heresy is to deny that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and Savior. To reduce Jesus to the status of a mere man, or to allow no more than a temporary indwelling of some divine power in him is to strike at the root of Christianity. Modern thinkers may have more refined ways of stating similar denials of the reality of the incarnation. It may be doubted whether they are any more immune to John's perception that they take the heart out of Christianity. For the person who denies that Jesus is the Son has no share in God the Father. If heretics thought that they could "have" God without believing in Jesus, they are completely mistaken. It is only through the Son that we know that God is Father, and it is only through the Son and

his propitiatory death that we can have access to God as Father.⁶

Liberal theologians should take to heart the warning of the Apostle John because they are not immune from the charge of heresy.

The Jesus Seminar

The "Jesus Seminar," which gained some notoriety in the early 1990's, was composed of atheists, agnostics, Jews, university professors, students, liberal Protestant and Catholic clergymen, theologians, a Hollywood movie producer, and some other non-scholars. They represented the radical wing of the religious left.

What brought them together was their common denial of the New Testament's claim that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. On this there was complete agreement. No conservative theologians or philosophers were part of the Seminar.

In order to keep out conservatives, the Seminar set forth "Seven Pillars of Scholarly Wisdom" and thirty-four "Rules Of Written Evidence" which set up a liberal litmus test to limit membership to those who embraced certain radical liberal dogmas.⁷ While anyone who did not agree with these dogmas was labeled a "non-scholar" or "uncritical thinker," anyone who did agree with their dogmas was called a "true scholar," "honest scholar," and "critical thinker." For example, one "rule" set forth to guide the members of the Seminar in deciding what Jesus could or could not say was that "Jesus makes no claim to be the Anointed, the messiah."⁸

The Seminar, then, began with the assumption that the "historical" Jesus never claimed to be the "messiah." Neither did he perform any miracles. Thus, whenever they ran into a Gospel text where Jesus claimed to be the Messiah or where he performed a miracle, they dismissed it as a pious fraud invented by well-meaning, but deluded disciples.

The "Pillars" and "Rules" of the Seminar reveal that a secular view of Jesus was the only view allowed. What is secularism? As a philosophy and methodology, secularism is the vacuum created by the denial of the sacred. Its goal is to strip away anything remotely sacred. Thus, the Seminar rejected the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible.⁹ They ridiculed evangelical and fundamental Christians in general and Southern Baptists and Missouri Synod Lutherans in particular.¹⁰ The biblical doctrine of Creation was denounced and Darwinian evolutionism put in its place.¹¹ They dogmatized that the Jesus of history was not the Christ of the Gospels or the creeds.¹² They naively assumed the Werde-Bousset thesis that Paul created Christianity from the Greek mystery religions and

that Jesus was not a Christian but a simple Jew.¹³ Thus, the picture of Jesus given in the New Testament is a "Christianized" Jesus invented by the early Church.¹⁴

While the members of the Seminar were unanimous in denying the Gospel, they could not agree as to who the "real" Jesus was or what he really did or said. Once they were no longer bound to the authority of Scripture, each member felt free to create a Jesus in his or her own image. This has resulted in chaos, conflict, and confusion as many contradictory views of Jesus emerged from the liberal matrix of subjectivism and relativism. So many different and conflicting Jesus's have been created that it is almost comical to see them fighting among themselves as to who has the "real" Jesus.

Was the "real" Jesus:

gay	or	heterosexual?
pacifist	or	revolutionary?
mystic	or	rational?
immoral	or	moral?
teacher	or	bandit?
feminist	or	woman hater?
black	or	white?

The chart above reveals the almost psychotic mentality that prevails among liberals when it comes to Jesus. While liberal homo-sexual theologians picture Jesus sleeping with his male disciples, such as John, the liberal hetero-sexual theologians have him sleeping with his female disciples, such as Martha! Will the "real" Jesus please stand up!

Some members of the Jesus Seminar are not oblivious to this situation and they recognize that they have a real problem on their hands. Some have even admitted that far too often "the Jesus we have found is the Jesus we wanted to find."¹⁵ They faced the constant temptation:

to create Jesus in our own image, to marshal the facts to support preconceived convictions . . . of finding a Jesus entirely congenial to [us].¹⁶

John Dominic Crossan

John Dominic Crossan, professor of religion at DePaul University, was co-founder and co-director of the Jesus Seminar. He admitted that:

Historical Jesus research is becoming something of a scholarly bad joke. There were always historians who said it could not be done because of historical problems. There were always theologians who said it should not be done because of theological objections. And there were always scholars who said the former when they meant the latter.¹⁷

. . . It seems we can have as many pictures of Jesus as there are exegetes. . . . But that stunning diversity is an academic embarrassment. It is impossible to avoid the suspicion that historical Jesus research is a very safe place to do theology and call it history, to do auto-biography and call it biography.¹⁸

Every time a new view of Jesus was published by a liberal scholar, Crossan admits that it “adds to the impression of acute scholarly subjectivism.”¹⁹ He even lists some contemporary conflicting views of Jesus among liberals:

Brandon: Jesus was a political revolutionary

Smith: Jesus was a magician

Vermes: Jesus was a Galilean charismatic

Chilton: Jesus was a Galilean rabbi

Falk: Jesus was a Hillelite or an Essene

Sanders: Jesus was an eschatological prophet

Whereas the average person would look upon such chaos with dismay, Crossan thinks that all these conflicting views are good:

What is happening now is rather a positive one. It is the number of competent and even eminent scholars producing pictures of Jesus at wide variance with one another.²⁰

This is no doubt why he felt free to throw his hat into the ring and create his own view of Jesus. This view gained some notoriety in the media due to his assertion that the body of Jesus was not resurrected but was actually devoured by wild dogs.²¹

In his books *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* and *The Historical Jesus*, Crossan assumed that the “historical” Jesus was not the “Christ of

faith." The "real" Jesus who actually existed in history was not the virgin-born Messiah, the Son of the living God. He did not in fact do any of the miracles attributed to him in the Gospels. In fact, neither did he say most of what is attributed to him in the Gospels. He was executed for revolutionary activities and, instead of being resurrected, his body was devoured by wild dogs. The last view we have of Crossan's Jesus is a dog running down the road with Jesus' leg bone in his mouth.

Crossan's methodology is based upon the Kantian dichotomy between the phenomenal (fact) and the noumenal (faith), Hegelian dialecticism, Darwinian evolutionism, Marxist ideology, and liberation theology. His claim that Jesus was a 60's style hippie is illustrative of the fact that Crossan's work is more an autobiography of himself than of a biography of Jesus.²²

Crossan's view of Jesus is just one more attempt by liberals to pass off their theology as history. He looked into the well of his own belief system and when he saw his own reflection, he thought he was seeing the "real" Jesus! This explains why Crossan could describe Jesus as a Neo-Marxist revolutionary peasant who tried to transform society into the Marxist's dream of a classless society where everyone was equal.²³ Crossan's Jesus is only himself writ large.

C.S. Lewis, in *The Screwtape Letters*, recorded a letter from Screwtape to Wormwood in which the search for the "historical Jesus" is revealed as a device of Satan to turn men away from the real Jesus found in the Gospels. What Lewis says clearly applies to the Jesus Seminar:

You will find that a good many Christian-political writers think that Christianity began going wrong, and departing from the doctrine of its Founder, at a very early stage. Now this idea must be used by us to encourage once again the conception of a "historical Jesus" to be found by clearing away later "accretions and perversions" and then to be contrasted with the whole Christian tradition. In the last generation we promoted the construction of such a "historical Jesus" on liberal and humanitarian lines; we are now putting forward a new "historical Jesus" in Marxian, catastrophic, and revolutionary lines. The advantages of these constructions, which we intend to change every thirty years or so, are manifold. In the first place they all tend to direct men's devotion to something which does not exist, for each "historical Jesus" is unhistorical. The documents say what they say and cannot be added to; each new "historical Jesus" therefore has to be got out of them by suppression at one point

and exaggeration at another, and by that sort of guessing (*brilliant* is the adjective we teach humans to apply to it) on which no one would risk ten shillings in ordinary life. . . . We thus distract men's minds from Who He is, and what He did . . . we substitute a merely probable, remote, shadowy, and uncouth figure, one who spoke a strange language and died a long time ago. . . . The "historical Jesus," then, however dangerous he may seem to be to us at some particular point, is always to be encouraged.²⁴

The fatal error of liberalism is its *a priori* assumption that the early Church created Jesus. But they have it backwards. The Church did not create Jesus—Jesus created the Church! They have forgotten the words, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

The second search for a "historical" Jesus will sink into the quagmire of its own subjectivism and relativism just as surely as the first search. The view of Jesus found in the New Testament *is* the historical Jesus of fact as well as of faith. He is the Christ, the Son of the living God and the only Savior of sinners.²⁵

The Existence of Jesus

The word "Jesus" is found in the New Testament 919 times. Is this "Jesus" a mythological symbol or was He a real historical person who lived and died nearly two thousand years ago?

Except for a few bigoted atheists, the existence of the historical Jesus is not doubted or debated anymore. There is more than sufficient historical evidence to demonstrate that Jesus actually lived and died.²⁶

The Personhood of Jesus

Is the name "Jesus" a metaphor for some kind of non-personal force or energy? Is He only a name for the good side of "the Force"? Or, is Jesus a true historical person with intellect, emotion, and will?

The Trinitarian begins with the *a priori* assumption that Jesus of Nazareth was a real historical person. Thus, we expect to find in the New Testament that Jesus manifested the attributes of personhood, i.e., Jesus will be described by the authors of the New Testament as doing and saying those things which only a person can do and say. And when we turn to the New Testament to see whether these assumptions are verified, we find that they are.

Jesus knows (John 2:24), speaks (Matt. 5:1), sees (John 1:48), loves or hates (Mark 10:21), wills (Matt. 26:39), gives or does not give (John 17:2), reveals or hides (Matt. 11:27), is pleased or is not pleased (II Cor. 5:9), forgives or does not forgive (Mark 2:5), sends (John 20:21), dies (I Cor. 15:3), etc. It is not a surprise that such pronouns as "he," "him," "his," etc., are used in reference to Jesus. These passages clearly demonstrate the personhood of Jesus.

Just as I John 1:3 demonstrated the absolute necessity of the personhood of the Father, it likewise demonstrates the absolute necessity of the personhood of the Son. The fact that any and all believers in every generation can at any time and in any place have fellowship with the heavenly Jesus reveals that He has to be a person:

What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have *fellowship with us*; and indeed *our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ*. (I John 1:3)

As we already pointed out, because the word μετὰ "with" is used three times in this passage, it grammatically means that just as we are not the Father, the Father is not the Son:

our fellowship is with (μετὰ) you

our fellowship is with (μετὰ) the Father

our fellowship is with (μετὰ) the Son

Any believer can stop what he or she is doing at any time and have fellowship with the risen Christ in heaven. This means that we can offer our praises and prayers to the ascended Son of God (Acts 7:59). First John 1:3 presupposes that Jesus is aware of and is capable of responding to our prayers and praise. While Trinitarians are completely comfortable with this truth, anti-Trinitarians have yet to face the implications of I John 1:3.

Jesus Is Greater Than All These Things

One possible objection to the personhood of Jesus is that on several occasions He referred to Himself using the neuter gender instead of the masculine. In Matthew 12:6, we read:

But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here.

λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι τοῦ ἱεροῦ μείζον ἐστὶν ὧδε.

Jesus referred to Himself as μείζον which is the neuter of μέγας and means that He was “a greater thing” than the temple (Thayer, 395).

In Matthew 12:41-42, Jesus referred to Himself as πλεῖον which is the neuter of πλείων and means that He was “a superior thing” to Jonah and Solomon (Thayer 516).

Jesus used the neuter instead of the masculine because He had in mind His divine *nature* which was “greater” than the physical nature of the temple and “superior” to the human nature of the prophets and kings. He was *more* than a carpenter, rabbi, prophet, etc., because He was *greater* in nature than all these things.

One reason why the Jews became so enraged with Jesus is that He claimed to be *greater* than the most important people and places in Judaism. Jesus was greater than the Patriarchs, such as Abraham and Jacob (John 8:53; 4:12). He was greater than the prophets, such as Jonah (Matt. 12:41). He was greater than the Kings, such as Solomon (Matt. 12:42). He was greater than Moses (Matt. 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44). He was even greater than the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28). But the most astounding claim of all was that He was greater than the Temple itself (Matt. 12:6).

The Jews clearly saw the logical implications of such claims. The only One who was “greater” than all these things was God Himself. Therefore, Jesus was claiming to be God. That is why they picked up stones to kill Him for *blasphemy* (John 8:52-59).

A Human Person

What must be in order for what is to be what it is? Given the theophanies of the Old Testament and the early Jewish literature, we would expect to find that the first heresy to afflict the Church would be a denial the humanity of Jesus. And when we turn the New Testament, we find that the earliest heresies refuted in the New Testament denied the humanity of the Christ, but not His deity.

The deity of the Christ was not controversial until much later because the theophanies in the Old Testament had already established the idea of Yahweh coming to earth in human form. The literature of early Judaism already spoke of Yahweh coming to earth as a man (Isa. 40:10-11; Mal. 3:1). It is, thus, no surprise to the Trinitarian that the first heresy to arise was Docetic Gnosticism. As Millard Erickson pointed out, it was probably

“the original heresy” and “the object of the apostle’s rebuttal in I John.”²⁷ He explains:

Doceticism (from the Greek verb δοκεῖν, “to seem”) was the belief that Jesus was not genuinely human, that he merely “seemed” or “appeared” to possess human nature. Just as the Docetic Gnostics had no difficulty accepting the deity of Jesus but only the humanity, so they had no difficulty accepting the idea that Mary was a virgin, but only that Jesus was genuinely born.²⁸

In his commentary on I John, Lias notes:

The Gnostics denied that the Deity could be united to matter, which they believed to be essentially alien to the Divinity. And so they denied the perfect manhood of the Son of God.²⁹

The classic commentator Robert Candlish explains:

In the dreamy and misty theosophy of the Gnostic anti-Christ, any Christ whom they would acknowledge at all could be nothing else than a sort of effect or emanation of Deity, a detached portion of the divine nature, or wisdom, or love; altogether visionary and unsubstantial; but withal very sublime. The idea of such a transcendental Christ being identical with the historical man, the man of “flesh and bones,” Jesus, was an outrage on their philosophy . . . that he was truly and personally himself the Christ, in his man-hood and in his manhood’s history and experience, especially in his birth and in his death, their subtle notions of spirit and matter compelled them strenuously to deny.³⁰

The point of controversy in the earliest heresies had to do with a denial of the *humanity* of Jesus Christ, i.e., that the Christ was a real human being, a man of flesh and blood. The Gnostics claimed that the divine Christ was a phantom or spirit manifestation, but not a real human being. This is why the New Testament writers stressed the doctrine of the Incarnation as the test of orthodoxy.

If the authors of the New Testament believed that Jesus Christ was a real flesh and blood man, how could they express that idea? What Greek words would they have to use to communicate that concept to their

readers? They would have to use the normal words for a flesh and blood body. And when we turn to the Scriptures, this is exactly what they did.

John's Writings

The apostle John was quite emphatic on the fleshly or human nature of the divine Logos. The eternal divine Word had now become incarnate, i.e., had become flesh and blood:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

The fleshly nature of the Incarnation is stressed by John in order to avoid the idea that Jesus was just another theophany, i.e., a temporary manifestation of God in human form. This is why John says that the Word “dwelt” among us. The Greek verb is ἐσκήνωσεν “dwelt” which is the aorist form of σκηνώω and has a distinct Old Testament significance and refers to when God Himself came down to earth and physically “dwelt” in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple:

“And let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that *I may dwell among them.*” (Exod. 25:8)

“Go and say to My servant David,” “Thus says [Yahweh]” “Are you the one who should build Me *a house to dwell in?* For I have not *dwelt in a house* since the day I brought up the sons of Israel from Egypt, even to this day; but *I have been moving about in a tent, even in a tabernacle.*” (II Sam. 7:5-6)

The divine Word did not just visit us, but He actually set up a tabernacle of flesh to live permanently among us. The body of Christ is thus the New Testament equivalent of the Tabernacle or Temple where God dwelt on earth (John 2:19-22). Balz and Schneider agree:

σκηνώω appears only in John 1:14 and 4 times in Revelation. The meaning *dwelt in a tent* is determined by the traditional-historical precedence of the OT, as in the meaning of σκηνή. In

the OT *sakan* (cf. Rabbinic *s'kind*) is used of God's revelation as an "indwelling" in a "tent" (Gese. 204).³¹

The normal Greek word for a physical body (σῶμα) was used to describe His incarnated "flesh" (John 19:38). It was this body that needed food, rest, and sleep (i.e., John 4:6, 7, 31-34; 19:28, etc.). It was this body that hung on the cross and died (John 19:33). And it was this same body which was physically resurrected three days later (John 2:18-22).

The doctrine of the humanity of Jesus the Christ means that He was *limited* like any other mortal man, i.e., in the same ways that we are limited. For example, just as we cannot do miracles by our own power (Acts 3:12), neither could He (John 5:30). Just as the Father is "greater" than us, the Father was "greater" than Jesus (John 14:28). Just as we address the Father as God, so did He (Matt. 27:46). Just as we can be overcome by emotion by the death of a friend, so was He (John 11:35). He was a "man" in the fullest sense of the term (John 8:40).

All the Gospel writers described Jesus Christ as a real human being. He was born of a woman. In his childhood years, Jesus had to grow in knowledge and physical strength just like any other child (Luke 2:52). He had to learn to crawl before he walked. He had to learn to talk. He did not know the alphabet automatically. He went to school with the other boys his age. He could get hungry and need food (Matt. 4:2). At times He was physically exhausted (Luke 8:23) and needed rest (Mark 6:31). He learned obedience by the things He suffered (Heb. 5:8). He had to ask the whereabouts of things (John 11:34) or to gain information (John 18:34). He did not know the time of the end of the world (Mark 13:32). He was tempted and tried in many ways (Heb. 2:18).

The full humanity of Jesus is demonstrated by the fact that He possessed all the human emotions that we have. The greatest of the Reformers, John Calvin, points out:

Certainly those who imagine that the Son of God was exempt from human passions do not truly and sincerely acknowledge him to be a man.³²

Jesus had the full range of the positive and negative emotions found in human nature except for sinful emotions. Calvin explains:

Still the weakness which Christ took upon himself must be distinguished from ours, for there is a great difference. In us there is no affection unaccompanied by sin, because they all exceed due bounds and proper restraint; but when Christ was

distressed by grief and fear, he did not rise against God, but continued to be regulated by the true rule of moderation. We need not wonder that, since he was innocent, and pure from every stain, the affections which flowed from him were pure and stainless, but that nothing proceeds from the corrupt nature of men which is not impure and filthy. Let us, therefore, attend to this distinction, that Christ, amidst fear and sadness, was weak without taint of sin; but that all our affections are sinful, because they rise to an extravagant height.³³

Jesus felt compassion and pity for the sick and the poor (Mark 1:41; 8:2). He became angry at sin and unbelief (Mark 1:25, 43; 8:30, 32; 10:14). He sighed with weariness at times (Mark 7:34) and at the stubbornness of sinners (Mark 8:12). He would like someone at first sight and then be disappointed with him later (Mark 10:21). Jesus went to a fig tree expecting to eat figs but was disappointed to find nothing (Mark 11:12-13). He could be surprised and amazed (Matt. 8:10; John 6:15).³⁴

The Test of Orthodoxy

John was so concerned that the humanity of Jesus be upheld as a core belief of the gospel, that he made it a test of whether or not one is a Christian:

1 John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.
 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;
 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus [has come in the flesh] is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

In Greek grammar, an author at times will not repeat certain words because he assumes the reader is smart enough to add them himself. It is called an *ellipsis*. The reason we added certain words in verse 4 and put them in [] is that they are an ellipsis.³⁵

Though the words “come in the flesh” are not found in the text, they must of course be mentally supplied.³⁶

John is clearly quoting a phrase from one of the early baptismal creeds of the Church. But none of the English translations do justice to the Greek text:

Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ
ἔστιν,

John did not simply say, "Jesus Christ *has come* in the flesh." The Greek verb ἐληλυθότα is a perfect participle. Rienecker and Rogers explain what this means:

The perf. tense indicates that the coming of Christ in the flesh was well known and that the effects of the Incarnation were abiding.³⁷

The Greek grammar indicates that the creed confesses "Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh *and remaining so*." Lenski comments:

"As having come in the flesh" describes the vital point confessed about "Jesus Christ." Namely his deity incarnate in flesh or human nature, once incarnate and remaining so (perfect participle). . . . It would be a serious mistake to think that John speaks of confessing only the one fact or doctrine of the Incarnation, of the Virgin Birth, of the two natures, so that it is of minor importance when other facts, doctrines, call them what you will, are either not confessed or are denied some way. "Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh" is not merely the center of the gospel but the whole of it.³⁸

This ancient creed set forth the following doctrines:

1. The pre-existence of Jesus, i.e., His deity,
2. Jesus is the Christ, i.e., His messiahhood,
3. Jesus came in the flesh, i.e., His Incarnation.

A.T. Robertson, the greatest Greek grammarian of the 20th century, points out that the early Christians confessed their faith in the true and full humanity of Jesus the Messiah in direct opposition to those heretics who denied it:

The predicate participle describes Jesus as already come in the flesh (his actual humanity, not a phantom body as the Docetic Gnostics held).³⁹

The humanity of Jesus Christ is also used as a test for orthodoxy in John's letter to the Elect lady:

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge *Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh*. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. (II John 1:7)

The Greek text is: Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί.

The verb ἐρχόμενον is a present participle. The significance of John's deliberate use of different tenses in his discussion of the Incarnation is noted in the chart below.

<u>Text</u>	<u>Verb</u>	<u>Tense</u>	<u>The Incarnation</u>	<u>Time</u>
I John 5:6	ἐλθὼν	aorist participle	a completed event	past
I John 4:2	ἐληλυθότα	perfect participle	an abiding result	present
II John 7	ἐρχόμενον	present participle	a timeless fact	future

By his use of different tenses, John is saying that the Incarnation was a completed event, a present reality, and a timeless fact. Prof. Marshall points out:

The use of the present and perfect tenses becomes significant if the point is that Jesus Christ had come and *still existed* "in flesh." . . . For him it was axiomatic that there had been a true incarnation, that the Word had become flesh and *remained flesh*.⁴⁰

Vincent, in his *Word Studies In The New Testament*, also points out the significance of the Greek tenses:

The verb is in the present participle, *coming*, which describes the manhood of Christ as *still being manifested*. In John iv. 2

we have the manifestation treated as a past fact by the perfect tense, ἐληλυθότα, *has come*.⁴¹

The failure to grasp the significance of the different Greek tenses used by John has led to two very serious errors. On the one hand, there are those such as the Jehovah's Witnesses who claim that at His resurrection Jesus became a *spirit* and, hence, was no longer "in the flesh." Thus, the spirit creature whom we call "Jesus" is not a man.

John's use of the perfect and present participle is a solid refutation of any view which denies the eternal infleshment of Christ. He did not become an angel or spirit being at his resurrection. Just because He is now a glorified man does not logical imply that He is less than man.

On the other hand, there are those who claim that at His resurrection the humanity of Jesus took upon itself the attributes of deity and hence is no longer truly human flesh. In effect, His humanity was swallowed up by His divinity.

Is the resurrected body of Jesus still truly human and thus limited by space and time just like our bodies or has His body taken on such divine attributes as infinitude and omnipresence? If the body of Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, can it be somewhere else at the same time?

Those who say that after the resurrection the body of Christ became universal and infinite instead of being particular and finite as it was before its resurrection, have actually denied that the ascended Jesus is still truly and fully *man*. If our bodies after the resurrection, although glorified, are still particular and finite, then on what grounds it is assumed that the human body of Christ is now universal and infinite because it has been resurrected?

John's use of the perfect and present participle in reference to the infleshment of Christ and such post-resurrection passages as I Tim. 2:5, prove that the ascended and glorified Son of God is still "the *man* Christ Jesus." In order for the resurrected Jesus to be truly and fully "man of very man," His resurrected human body must be limited and finite because it is still glorified flesh.

The Apostle Paul

The humanity of Jesus Christ is one of the fundamental doctrines found in the Pauline Epistles. Why some liberals would claim that he did not know of or believe in the historical Jesus of the Gospels is beyond comprehension. He clearly speaks of "the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5). Paul even notes that it was the Jews who killed Jesus (I Thess. 2:15). The

descent of Christ to earth is taught in I Timothy 1:15 and II Corinthians 8:9. And His descent into Hades at death is mentioned in Ephesians 4:9. Other references to the humanity of Jesus include:

[God sent] His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. (Rom. 8:3)

He was revealed in the flesh. (I Tim. 3:16)

In Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form. (Col. 2:9)

Born of a woman. (Gal. 4:4)

A descendent of David according to the flesh. (Rom. 1:3)

Whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh. (Rom. 9:5)

[He was] the last Adam. (I Cor. 15:45)

He had half-brothers. (I Cor. 9:5)

He experienced poverty. (II Cor. 8:9)

He was crucified, buried, and then resurrected on the third day. (I Cor. 15:3-4; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:4-10)

One interesting question that arises is why there is no mention of Mary by name in the Church epistles. Although Paul does refer to her by the generic term "woman" in Galatians 4:4, nowhere is she referred to by name. Why is this?

Mary had a significant role to play in the *history* of redemption as the woman blessed of God to bare the Messiah. Thus, she is mentioned in the Gospels and the Acts which are *historical* narratives.

In contrast, the Church Epistles are didactic in nature and explain the plan of salvation. Since Mary had no role in the *work* of redemption and Paul's focus is to explain salvation, there was no reason to bring her up. This is why she is never specifically mentioned in the Epistles.

The liberal assumption that Paul wrote his epistles before the Gospels were written is refuted by the fact that he quotes Luke 10:7 in I Timothy 5:18 and refers to it as "Scripture." He appealed to the words of Jesus as being authoritative (I Tim. 6:3-5) and knew when he was saying something that Jesus did not say while on earth (I Cor. 7:10 cf. 25).

The crucifixion is viewed by Paul as the climax of Christ's work of atonement:

Phil. 2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.
8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth,
11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This passage is a hymn of praise to Christ in which His pre-existence, deity, incarnation, death, resurrection, session, and glorification are celebrated.

The Apostle Peter

Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost emphasized the humanity of Jesus:

Acts 2:22 "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—
23 this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.
24 And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power."

In his epistles, Peter emphasized that the flesh of Jesus suffered and that His body was crucified for our sins:

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, *having been put to death in the flesh*, but made alive by the Spirit. (I Pet. 3:18)

Christ has *suffered in the flesh*. (I Pet. 4:1)

He Himself *bore our sins in His body on the cross*. (I Pet. 2:24)

According to the authors of the New Testament, the *man* Jesus was born, lived, died, was resurrected, and is now seated in heaven at the right hand of the Father. As a *man* He will return to this world to resurrect and judge the righteous and the wicked (Acts 1:11).

Christ's humanity is as essential for our salvation as is His deity (Heb. 2:17). A Mediator between God and man who is not fully God or not fully man is like a bridge broke at either end. In order to represent us to the Father, He must be truly man. In order to represent the Father to us, He must be truly God. A Mediator who is not quite God or not quite man is not capable of bringing the two together.

A Sinless Man

Unlike the first Adam, the *man* Jesus did not sin when tempted by the devil (Matt. 4:1-11). His sinlessness is directly stated in the following passages:

"the Holy and Righteous One." (Acts 3:14)

Him who *knew no sin*. (II Cor. 5:21)

One who has been tempted in all things as we are, *yet without sin*. (Heb. 4:15)

For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, *holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners* and exalted above the heavens. (Heb. 7:26)

Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth. (I Pet. 2:22)

He is *pure*. (I John 3:3)

Jesus came to undue all the evil the first Adam created. His sinlessness is as essential for our salvation as is His humanity because in order to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins, He could not have any sins of His own (II Cor. 5:21). He was the spotless Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

Two Natures

We have hopefully demonstrated that Jesus Christ was “man of very man” as the early creeds declare. For many, this is enough. They see no reason to go *beyond* the bare assertion of his human nature. He was a good man, a wonderful teacher, and a great prophet. Why go beyond this and say that Jesus was “God of very God” as well as “man of very man”? Why posture a second nature for Jesus?

Trinitarians struggle with the fact that if you look at Jesus one way, He is a man. But if you look at Him another way, He is God. When we say that Jesus has two “natures,” all we mean is that *one* explanation of who Jesus was is not enough. There is *more* to Jesus than His human nature.

The word “nature” has proven to be a source of much contention. Process theologians throw up their hands and dogmatically assert that the word has no meaning. What they fail to understand is that the word “nature” was never intended to be used in an esoteric way. It was never intended to be a sophisticated philosophic term that only those who have had several years of philosophy could understand.

The word “nature” was a common word in its own day and was readily understood by the man in the street. When he looked into a mirror, he knew that he was seeing someone who was a human being *by nature*, i.e., he did not *become* a human being at a certain age. He did not have to go to school to become a human being. His humanness was not something conferred on him by others. No. His humanness was essential and necessary to what He is. That is what we mean by “human nature.”

In order to convey the concept that Jesus Christ was both man and God, the early Church picked a word out the language of its day that would indicate to the average person that the humanness and deity of Jesus were both essential and necessary to what He is. Any “Jesus” who is not both human and divine by *nature* (i.e., essentially and necessarily) cannot be the biblical Christ. This is what we mean by “two natures.”

Did the authors of the New Testament believe in the two natures of Christ? If they did, then we will find them giving *two* explanations of Jesus. On the other hand, if they did not, then we should find them giving only *one* explanation for who Jesus was.

What must be in order for what is to be what it is? When we turn to the New Testament, we find *two* explanations of Jesus Christ. They looked twice at Jesus, not just once. To say that He was a good man was not enough for them. Several examples will verify this to be true.

Romans 1:1-4

Rom. 1:1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,
 2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,
 3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,

περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος
 Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα,

4 who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

τοῦ ὀρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα
 ἁγιοσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
 τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν,

In his introduction to his letter to the Romans, Paul begins by emphasizing that the Gospel is rooted in Old Testament theology and experience. Justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from the works of the Law was not a new or novel idea. Paul did not invent it.

The gospel of free grace was the gospel of God the Father in Old Testament times before it was the “gospel of Christ” in New Testament times. This is why Paul quotes so profusely from the Old Testament throughout this epistle.

What is significant is that when Paul pauses to identify who “Jesus Christ our Lord” is he has to give *two* different explanations. The parallels and contrasts are clear even to the casual reader:

“Jesus Christ our Lord”

“who was born”
 “the seed of David”
 “according to the flesh”
 “through his prophets”

“who was declared”
 “the Son of God”
 “according to the Spirit”
 “by the resurrection”

Paul was not saying that Jesus *became* the Son of God at His resurrection, but that His resurrection was the final public proof that He *was* indeed the Son of God. The Father would not have raised Jesus if He were a fraud.⁴²

The resurrection was the final public proof that Jesus was more than a carpenter. If you look at Jesus one way, He was a descendent of David. But if you look again, He was more than that. He was the Son of God. G.T. Shedd comments:

The Son here spoken of is the *incarnate* Son, constituted of two natures which are described in the context . . . The human nature in the incarnate Son was "born," or "made to become," from "the seed of David." Christ's humanity was not created *ex nihilo*, but was procreated . . . Christ's resurrection evinced his divinity, but did not decide or determine it. It was one of the indications of his super-human nature . . . υἱός] is here employed differently from what it is in verse 3; namely, in the *metaphysical* or Trinitarian sense, and denotes the unincarnate Son prior to his assumption of σάρξ. υἱός is here equivalent to the λόγος of John i.1.⁴³

In Paul's mind, Jesus was two things: Son of David and Son of God. The first is proven by His genealogy and the second by His resurrection. The classic German commentator Olshausen concludes:

The words υἱοῦ θεοῦ form, therefore, in this place, an opposition and climax to the υἱὸς Δαυὶδ. Christ was both at the same time, the Son of God from eternity, the son of David in time.⁴⁴

Some modern commentators make the mistake of assuming that, because Paul points to two stages in Christ's life (birth and resurrection), he does not refer to Christ's two natures.⁴⁵ But the Greek grammar is quite clear that it is the "Son" who was incarnate and whose sonship was declared at the resurrection (verse 3). The Son is never anything less than the Son from all eternity. Hendriksen comments:

Paul confesses Jesus to be God's Son. He means that the Savior was God's Son entirely apart from and antecedently to his assumption of the human nature. He is the Son of God from all eternity; hence, he is God.⁴⁶

The process from incarnation to glorification is possible only if Paul has in mind the two natures of Christ. That this is the case is seen from Romans 9:5 where the phrase “according to the flesh” is used once again to describe one side of the person of Jesus Christ our Lord:

Whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ *according to the flesh*, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.
(Rom. 9:5)

Once again Paul sets up a contrast where Jesus is seen as being two different things at the same time. The antecedent of the pronoun “whose” is the “Israelites” mentioned in verse 4. “According to the flesh” means that Jesus was a Jew. But Paul rushes on to add that Jesus was *more* than a Jewish male. He is also “over all, God blessed forever.”

Since we will exegete Romans 9:5 later on in this chapter, we will not comment any further on it. The two natures of Christ are also seen in such passages as Philemon 2:5-11 and I Timothy 3:16. Our point is that the writers of the New Testament give two explanations for the nature of Christ—not one. B.B. Warfield comments:

It is not necessary to labor the point. It is undeniable that the Christ of the whole body of New Testament writers, without exception, is a Two Natured Person—divine and human; and indeed this is scarcely any longer denied.⁴⁷

That is to say, the doctrine of the Two Natures of Christ is not merely the synthesis of the teaching of the New Testament, but the conception which underlies every one of the New Testament writings severally; it is not only the teaching of the New Testament as a whole but of the whole of the New Testament, part by part.

Historically, this means that not only has the doctrine of the Two Natures been the invariable presupposition of the whole teaching of the church from the apostolic age down, but all the teaching of the apostolic age rest on it as its universal presupposition.⁴⁸

If the dual nature of Christ was something assumed by the authors of the New Testament, then we would expect to find the concept in the writings of the early Church. And this is the case. The term “*δύο οὐσίαι*” is found first in the writings of Melito of Sardis. But it is clear that Melito did not invent the term or the concept. It was already a part of the

Church's confession before he came along. Later writers referred to it as "δύο φύσεις" or "duae substantie."

But the issue of the two natures of Christ does not hang on when the final terminology to express that idea was developed. The idea can be expressed in numerous ways and thus even when we do not find the exact words "δύο φύσεις" or "δύο οὐσίαι" in an apostolic Father, he may be saying the same thing in different words. For example, anyone familiar with the writings of Ignatius knows that he clearly believed in the two natures of Christ, although he did not use the terms developed later on by others who likewise believed in it.

The claim that the doctrine of the two natures of Christ was invented for the first time by the Council of Chalcedon is a liberal myth based on the erroneous idea that an idea cannot predate its final formulation. As B. B. Warfield points out:

it is clear that the doctrine decreed at Chalcedon was nothing new; and if, as is often the case, the further suggestion is conveyed that what was new in it was the "Two Natures" itself, the perversion becomes monstrous.⁴⁹

This same "monstrous perversion" is the basis of the erroneous assertion that the doctrine of the Trinity did not exist until the word "Trinity" was first used! Those who use such arguments fail to understand that *a concept can predate its final formulation*.

The Apostle was only following the precedent already set by the Old Testament in such passages as Isaiah 9:6 and Isaiah 7:14 which described the Messiah as the Son of God who would become the Child born of the Virgin. This Messiah is both Son of God (Ps. 2) and son of David (II Sam. 7:12).

His Pre-Existence

In line with the intertestamental Jewish teaching of the eternal pre-existence of the Messiah, the authors of the New Testament clearly taught that Jesus Christ did not begin His existence in the womb of the Virgin. He actually pre-existed from all eternity.

By "pre-existence" we mean that while the body of Jesus began with its conception in the womb, the mind or soul of Jesus existed before the conception of His fleshly body. Jesus is, thus, unique in that He was the only man whose soul pre-existed his conception in the womb of his mother. Whereas we begin to exist at conception, the Son of God pre-existed His entrance into this world.

When we turn to the Old Testament, we find such texts as Proverbs 30:4 which speak of the Son of God as someone who existed at that time. It is, thus, no wonder, as we have already documented, that the early Jewish literature described the Messiah as pre-existing His coming to earth. The New Testament picks up this concept and applies it to Jesus without hesitation.

The Theophanies

We have already seen that in Old Testament times Yahweh came to earth in human form and communed with the Patriarchs and prophets of old. The link between this God-man and the Messiah was given in the name "Wonderful" (נִפְלֵא) which is found in Judges 13:17-18 and Isaiah 9:6. The New Testament then links together Jesus and the God-man seen by Isaiah in John 12:

John 12:36 "While you have the light, believe in the light, in order that you may become sons of light." These things Jesus spoke, and He departed and hid Himself from them.
 37 But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him;
 38 that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?"
 39 For this cause they could not believe, for Isaiah said again,
 40 "HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES, AND HE HARDED THEIR HEART; LEST THEY SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED, AND I HEAL THEM."
 41 These things Isaiah said, because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.
 42 Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue;

The passage is quite straight forward:

1. The person in view is Jesus. The passage begins and ends with Him.
2. The fact that Jesus was rejected by the Pharisees is viewed by John as a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:1 and Isaiah 6:10.
3. Since he had just quoted Isaiah 6:10, John looked at the context and saw that Isaiah had seen "the Lord" (יְהוָה) in verse 1 whom

he later identified as יהוה "Yahweh" in 6:5. Adonai Yahweh appeared to him in human form sitting on a throne in the temple. John explains that this God-man was none other than Jesus in His pre-existent glory.

The grammar of the Greek text of John 12:41 is clear:

ταῦτα εἶπεν Ἡσαΐας ὅτι εἶδεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐλάλησεν περὶ αὐτοῦ.

According to the apostle John, when Isaiah said that he had seen יהוה, he was speaking περὶ αὐτοῦ "about Him," i.e., Jesus. As Hengstenberg points out, "αὐτοῦ refers back to verse 37."⁵⁰

Of this there can be "no doubt," according to the famous Greek scholar J.B. Lightfoot in his *Commentary On The New Testament From the Talmud and Hebraica*.⁵¹ The classic French commentator Godet explains:

John justifies in this verse the application which he has just made to Jesus Christ of the vision of Isa. vi. The Adonai whom Isaiah beheld at that moment was the divine being who is incarnated in Jesus. Here also John and Paul meet together; comp. I Cor. X.4, where Paul calls the one who guided Israel from the midst of the Cloud Christ.⁵²

The ancient Latin and Syriac versions of John's gospel agree with this understanding. The Syriac text says:

It was of Christ, who manifested Himself to him as Adonai, that Isaiah spoke when he uttered such words.⁵³

4. There is no honest way to avoid the grammar of the text. All the pronouns "Him" refers to the proper name "Jesus" from verse 36. Even verse 42 clearly refers to Jesus and continues using the same pronoun "Him." We have placed the pronouns in bold text so the reader can see that they all refer back to Jesus.

5. John 12:36-42 establishes the link between the theophanies of the Old Testament and the Jesus of the New Testament. Whenever Yahweh in the Old Testament came to earth as a man, this was probably the pre-existent Jesus.

He Came to This World

This is no doubt why John pictured Jesus as “coming” into this world because He was “sent” here by the Father (John 1:3; 3:16-17, 19; I John 4:3, etc.). When Jesus claimed to have existed before Abraham, the Jews clearly understood that this was a claim not only for pre-existence, but also for deity, and they picked up stones to kill him for the blasphemy (John 8:53-59).

The other writers of the New Testament likewise described Jesus as “coming” to this world from a previous place (I Tim. 1:15; Heb. 1:6; 2:14, etc.). We are then told that He came “down from heaven” to earth:

“I have come *down from heaven*.” (John 6:38)

“He who *descended from heaven*, even the Son of Man.” (John 3:13)

“He who *comes from above* is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes *from heaven* is above all.” (John 3:31)

The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is *from heaven*. (I Cor. 15:47)

The Lord Jesus Christ left heaven to embrace our poverty so that we might leave earth and inherit His riches!

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. (II Cor. 8:9)

One significant passage which establishes the pre-existence of Christ as the eternal Son of God is Romans 8:3. The doctrine of Christ's Eternal Sonship is clearly taught in this text:

For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: *sending His own Son* in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.

τὸ γὰρ ἀδύνατον τοῦ νόμου ἐν ᾧ ἡσθένει διὰ
τῆς σαρκός, ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν πέμψας ἐν
ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας
κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ σαρκί,

The phrase τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν πέμψας “sending His own Son” is very significant. Who did God send to earth? “His *own* Son.” Thus Jesus was the Son *before* He came to earth. As the German commentator Heinrich Meyer pointed out, “the conception of the pre-existence and metaphysical Sonship of Christ is to be recognized.”⁵⁴ The great Princeton theologian Charles Hodge comments:

. . . his own Son, τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν. The term Son here evidently designates the eternal personal Son. He was from eternity, and in virtue of his Divine nature, and not in virtue of his miraculous birth, or his exaltation, the Son of God.⁵⁵

There are three terms in the New Testament which indicate the eternal pre-existence and deity of Christ:

term	text	meaning
μονογενῆ	John 3:16	His <i>unique</i> Son
ἴδιον	John 5:18	His <i>own</i> Father
ἑαυτοῦ	Rom. 8:3	His <i>own</i> Son

William G.T. Shedd, in his commentary on the Greek text of Romans, points out:

These three epithets distinguish the eternal sonship of the second Trinitarian person, from the adoptive sonship of believers, spoken of in viii. 14-17, *et alia*.⁵⁶

The eternal pre-existence of Christ is something clearly assumed by the authors of the New Testament. Indeed, it would be impossible for them to write such passages as Romans 8:3, if they did not believe in it.

The Deity of Christ

We now proceed from the pre-existence of Christ to His deity for a very good reason. While the concept of the pre-existence of Christ does not

require the deity of Christ, the deity of Christ does require the pre-existence of Christ. If His pre-existence is eternal, then His deity is established.

What must be in order for what is to be what it is? If the authors of the Bible believed that the Messiah existed from all eternity, how would they express that idea in Hebrew and Greek? What words would they use? They would have to use whatever contemporary words and phrases meant “eternity” or “before the creation of the world.”

What if they did not believe in the eternal pre-existence of the Messiah? Then they would not use such words. And when we open up the Bible what do we find?

Micah 5:2

Following the traditional Jewish hermeneutic, Micah 5:2 is given a messianic interpretation in Matthew 2:6 and John 7:41-42. This was perfectly in line with the Septuagint, the Targums, and the early Jewish writings.

Micah 5:2 not only states that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, but also that He pre-existed His birth from all eternity:

“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *too* little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.

וְאַתָּה בֵּית-לֶחֶם אֶפְרַתָּה צָעִיר לְהֵיוֹת בְּאַלְפֵי יְהוּדָה
מִמָּהָר לִי יֵצֵא לְהֵיוֹת מוֹשֵׁל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּמוֹצָאָתוֹ
מִקֶּדֶם מִיָּמֵי עוֹלָם:

λεξ καὶ σύ Βηθλεεμ οἶκος τοῦ Εφραθα
ὀλιγοστός εἶ τοῦ εἶναι ἐν χιλιάσιν Ἰουδα ἐκ
σοῦ μοι ἐξελεύσεται τοῦ εἶναι εἰς ἄρχοντα ἐν
τῷ Ἰσραηλ καὶ αἱ ἔξοδοι αὐτοῦ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἐξ
ἡμερῶν αἰῶνος

While the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, He did not begin to exist at Bethlehem. His וּמוֹצָאָתוֹ “goings forth” (Gk. ἔξοδοι αὐτοῦ) stretch back beyond the womb to:

English	Hebrew	Greek
"long ago"	מִקֶּדֶם	ἀπ' ἀρχῆς
"days of eternity"	מִימֵי עוֹלָם	ἐξ ἡμερῶν αἰῶνος

Micah 5:2 is an example of Hebrew parallelism in which the second phrase expands upon and goes beyond the first phrase to deepen its meaning. In this sense, you go from the lesser to the greater as you proceed from the first phrase to the second phrase. It is a classic example of climactic parallelism.

The first word מִקֶּדֶם "long ago" is found many times in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and has several different meanings depending on the context. When used geographically, it refers to east as opposed to west (i.e., Isa. 9:12; Ezek. 25:10). When used chronologically, it means "before" (i.e., Prov. 8:22). It is also used to describe the eternity of God in (Deut. 33:27; Ps. 74:12; Hab. 1:12).

Since Micah is using climactic parallelism, he begins by saying that the "goings forth" of the Messiah took place "a very long time ago." How far back "his goings forth" goes is determined by the words of the second phrase.

The Hebrew word עוֹלָם "eternity" used in the second phrase, is found in the Old Testament 420 times. Langenscheidt defines it as:

time immemorial, time past, eternity, distant future, duration, everlasting time, life time; pl. ages, endless time.⁵⁷

All the standard Hebrew Lexicons and grammars agree with Langenscheidt.⁵⁸ It is a word which was used to contrast one thing to another. The mountains are seemingly "everlasting" when contrasted with the brief life span of man (Hab. 3:6). But when used of God in such places as Psalms 90:2, it means that He is eternal in contrast to the universe which had a beginning and will have an end.

In Micah 5:2, the prophet emphasizes that the Messiah not only pre-existed "a long time ago," but He has in fact existed "from eternity!" In *Lange's Commentary*, Kleinnert pointed out that Micah's use of the word עוֹלָם "gives a strict proof of the antemundane life of the Messiah."⁵⁹ *Laetsch's Commentary* states that עוֹלָם here means "the timeless eons of eternity."⁶⁰

A Liberal Objection Answered

Some liberal commentators have attempted to reduce “the days of eternity” to just “a long time ago.” But this is grammatically faulty because they are going backwards. In this kind of parallelism, you go from the lesser to the greater and not the other way around. Thus, the parallelism in Micah 5:2 reveals that the Messiah was “from a long time ago,” i.e., “from days of eternity.”

The Septuagint

This understanding of Micah 5:2 is clearly in line with the pre-Christian Jewish interpretations of the text. The Septuagint translates מִקֶּדֶם “from long ago” as ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, meaning that the Messiah pre-existed “from the Beginning,” i.e., He was there at the Creation event. Micah’s use of the word ἀρχῆς in Micah 5:2 is paralleled to Genesis 1:1: ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν.

The Septuagint goes on to translate מִיָּמֵי עוֹלָם “from days of eternity” as ἐξ ἡμερῶν αἰῶνος “to days of eternity.” This indicates that the Messiah existed *before* Creation. Since the space/time universe was created at the beginning, the concept of “eternity” is used in the Bible to describe what transpired “before” Creation (Matt. 25:34; Eph. 1:4, etc.).

The Greek word αἰῶνος “eternity” is the word used by the Greeks to indicate eternity. The use of αἰῶνος in the second phrase as a magnification of ἀρχῆς in the first phrase reveals that the pre-existence of the Messiah extends before the Creation of all things described in Genesis 1:1, i.e., to eternity itself. Bagster’s English translation of the Septuagint correctly renders it as:

. . . his goings forth were from the beginning, *even from eternity*.⁶¹

The New Testament

When we turn to the New Testament, we are told the same exact thing. The Apostle John says:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν
θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

The Greek verb ἦν “was” is the imperfect of εἶμι and indicates that the Word already existed when the Beginning began. Rienecker and Rogers point out:

The imperf. expresses continuous timeless existence (Bernard), and is contrasted with ἐγένετο of v.3 (Barrett).⁶²

Murray Harris, at one time Warden of Tyndale House, Cambridge, points out that:

Since the Greek Bible begins with the expression ἐν ἀρχῇ (“in the beginning”), rendering בְּרֵאשִׁית, it seems likely that John is alluding to Gen. 1:1. But whereas the first verse of the Torah continues “God created,” John follows with “the Word [already] existed.” In Genesis the creation of the world is contemporaneous with or marks “the beginning”; in John the existence of the Word is anterior to the “the beginning” . . . John implies the eternal preexistence of the Word.⁶³

John is clearly emphasizing that when the Beginning began, the Word was already in existence.

In John 17, we read:

And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father,
with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.
(John 17:5)

There are three things this text clearly teaches:

1. Christ pre-existed His birth on earth.
2. Christ's pre-existence goes all the way back to “before the world was” created, i.e., eternity.
3. The Son shared eternal glory with the Father.

Once again, in the book of Colossians Paul states:

For *by Him* all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created *by Him* and

for Him. And He is *before* all things, and *in Him* all things hold together. (Col. 1:16-17)

The different prepositions used by Paul reveal the following points:

Christ's Relationship to All Things

1. "*by Him* all things were created"; i.e., He is the Creator
2. "*in Him* all things hold together"; i.e., He is the Sustainer
3. "He is *before* all things"; i.e., He is eternally pre-existent
4. "All things have been created . . . *for Him*"; i.e., all things exist for His glory

Christ's eternal pre-existence forms the context of the Trinitarian doctrine of the deity of Christ. The anti-Trinitarians have always had a rough time dealing with such passages and usually avoid any serious exegesis when confronted with such texts as examined above.

The Unitarian Controversy

The liberals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries admitted that Jesus was a real person, but denied that the Bible taught that He was deity. The Unitarian controversy of the nineteenth century generated thousands of books, booklets, and sermons attacking the Trinity and the deity of Jesus on the grounds that the Bible did not really teach such doctrines. The great question of the day was "Does the Bible teach that Jesus was divine?"

The nineteenth century Unitarian controversy produced the most detailed and sophisticated anti-Trinitarian arguments and works. Orthodox and liberal scholars debated Hebrew and Greek grammar and syntax. Although in its infancy, textual criticism was utilized by both sides.

The influence of the nineteenth century Unitarian controversy is still felt today in the writings of such cultic groups as the Jehovah's Witnesses who still depend almost entirely on the arguments developed at that time. Watchtower books and magazines are filled with quotations from nineteenth century anti-Trinitarian works. One wonders whether anyone at the Brooklyn headquarters has read anything from the twentieth century.

The liberals did their best to undermine all the texts that Trinitarians have used for nearly two thousand years. But when the dust finally settled, the Trinitarian scholarship triumphed and the liberals grudgingly

admitted that the New Testament did in fact teach that Jesus was God. But this did not mean that they were ready to become Christians. Instead, they now used the New Testament doctrine of the deity of Christ as a reason to reject Christianity.

The Shifting of the Gears

Modern liberalism was born at the beginning of the twentieth century when the liberals shifted gears and began to argue that the New Testament idea that Jesus was God was an idea borrowed from pagan Greek mystery religions. The man Jesus had been elevated by Paul into a God due to pagan influences.

One example of modern liberalism is Thomas Sheehan's book *The First Coming*. Section three of the book is entitled "How Jesus Became God." Sheehan admits that the New Testament clearly teaches:

1. the savior's preexistence as God in heaven,
2. the incarnation as the God-man Jesus, and
3. after his redemptive death and resurrection, his re-exaltation as Lord and Christ and his recognition as God.⁶⁴

Sheehan demonstrates from John 1:1-16; Romans 8:3; Galatians 4:4; Philippians 2:6-11; and Colossians 1:15-20 that the New Testament teaches the eternal pre-existence and deity of Christ.⁶⁵ But does this lead Sheehan to become a Christian? By no means.

Sheehan asserts that Jesus was turned into God by the Gentile converts who flooded into the early church. They drew upon their pagan religious background and turned Jesus into a God patterned after Demeter, Dionysos, Orpheus, Isis, Osiris, Cybele, Attis, Atargais, Adonis, and Mithra.⁶⁶ We are once again back to the old Werde-Boussett thesis.

Sheehan is not unique in his reliance on Werde and Bousset. The same problem surfaces in P.M. Casey's *From Jewish Prophet To Gentile God*, John Hick's *Myth of God Incarnate*, and hundreds of other liberal books. Even Bultmann, in his introduction to the 5th edition of Bousset's *Kyrios Christos*, admitted that his work was built on the *a priori* assumption of the validity of Bousset's thesis!

The liberals first said that the Trinitarians were wrong because the Bible did *not* teach the Trinity. Then the liberals said that the Trinitarians were wrong because the Bible *did* teach the Trinity. It would seem that even when the Trinitarians are proven right, the liberals still said they are wrong! This reveals an underlying anti-Christian bias at work.

Of course, as we have already documented, the Werde-Boussett thesis upon which modern liberalism rests, cannot be reconciled with the literature of early Judaism. Both Werde and Bousset were grossly ignorant of this literature. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was the last straw which broke the back of the idea that the Christology of the New Testament is pagan in origin.

Why then do so many modern liberals still assume the Werde-Boussett thesis? As Hendrikus Boers points out, Bousset's:

Kyrios Christos remains unchallenged. This applies not only to its fundamental concept of the origin and development of NT Christology, but also to its methodology and its presentation of the Christology of the NT. The fact that NT scholarship has moved beyond it on many points makes it all the more unfortunate.⁶⁷

The only reason the Werde-Boussett thesis remains a pillar of modern liberalism is that it has proven itself a quick and easy apologetic against biblical Christianity. This is why atheists and skeptics love it so much. The secret of its survival must be traced back to anti-Christian bigotry.

New Testament Christology

If the authors of the New Testament believed that Jesus was God as well as man, how would they express that idea? What words would they use to indicate that He is God as well as man? Trinitarians assume that the authors would use the same words which they used to indicate the deity of the Father.

Trinitarians begin with the assumption that once we accept the validity of the arguments used to prove the deity of the Father, we must accept the validity of these same arguments when applied to the Son. No amount of special pleading can overcome the simple observation that once an argument is deemed biblically and logically valid, it cannot be dismissed later on because it takes us where we do not want to go. No one should start out on the path of truth unless he is willing to accept its ultimate destination.

What We Expect to Find

1. The names of God will be applied to the Son.
2. The attributes of God will be applied to the Son.
3. The works of God will be applied to the Son.

4. The words of God will be applied to the Son.
5. The worship of God will be applied to the Son.

The Names of God

Did the authors of the New Testament ever use the Greek terms for God (θεός, κύριος etc.) in reference to Jesus? If they believed that He was divine, then we would expect them to do so. They would also use Hebraic terms such as "I Am." But if they did not believe that He was God, then we would not expect them to apply such terms to Jesus.

Jesus as θεός

The liberal attempt in the nineteenth century to deny that Jesus was referred to as θεός "God" in the New Testament was refuted by their own scholars such as the Unitarian Greek scholar Joseph Thayer. No one today bothers to deny that the word θεός is applied to Jesus in the New Testament. Such passages as John 1:1 preclude any attempt to deny this grammatical reality.

Where the disagreement comes in is the issue of the *meaning* and *significance* of the word θεός when it is applied to Jesus. Is He really called "God" as in the full sense of Deity or only a "god" in a metaphorical sense like the devil or some pagan deity? This means that we must understand how the word θεός was used in the Greek New Testament.

Dr. Murray Harris has done the most extensive and exhaustive analysis of the usage of the Greek word θεός in ancient extra-biblical and biblical literature.⁶⁸ It would be helpful to summarize his work at this point.

First, the Greek word θεός is used in the Septuagint as the translation of the following Hebrew names of God.

θεός In The Septuagint

Heb. equivalent	number of times
אלהים (Elohim)	2,280
יהוה (YHWH)	353
אל (El)	163
אדני (Adonai)	11

The New Testament's Usage of θεός

The Septuagint's usage of the word θεός formed the basis of its usage in the New Testament as a generic term indicating any and all deities in general, including the true God. It was a *title* of deity and not a personal name of God. Thus, it is used of Satan (II Cor. 4:40), men (Acts 14:11), pagan deities (I Cor. 8:4), and even the belly, i.e., fleshly appetites (Phil. 3:19).

One question frequently asked is "If the word θεός does not have a definite article, does this mean that something less than true deity is in view? Could Jesus be θεός but not ὁ θεός?"

The word θεός appears 1,315 times in the New Testament. Seventy-eight percent of the time it appears with a definite article and 21.6% times without an article. Those unfamiliar with the Greek language often assume that when the true God is in view, the word Jeos will have the article. When θεός appears without the article, the word θεός does not refer to the true God. Thus, the typical Jehovah's Witness defends their organization's translation of John 1:1c, "the Word was a god," on the basis that the word θεός does not have the article.

After his detailed analysis of the presence or absence of the article, Murray Harris concludes that generally speaking:

ὁ θεός and θεός are often used interchangeable.⁶⁹ It is therefore not possible to maintain that whenever θεός is anarthrous [without the article], it differs from ὁ θεός in meaning or emphasis.⁷⁰

The statistical evidence bears this out. For example, the Father is referred to as θεός *without the article* in such places as John 1:6, while Jesus is referred to as θεός *with the article* in such places as John 20:28. If the presence or absence of the article indicates whether true deity is in view, then the Father is only "a god" and Jesus is the true "God!"

But this does not mean that the presence or absence of the article never has any meaning. There are times when it has a *grammatical* significance. For example, in those cases where both ὁ θεός and θεός appear with the connecting word καὶ in the same verse, the Granville Sharp rule may apply. We will develop this thought later on in the chapter.

There are a few other times when the absence or presence of the article before the word Jeos does have a grammatical significance. But these are rare exceptions to the general rule that in the vast majority of cases, the absence or presence of the article before θεός has no significance whatsoever.

With this brief introduction, we will now examine the passages in the New Testament where Jesus is addressed as θεός "God."

The Logos

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

John used an early Aramaic Christian hymn to Christ as God as the introduction to his Gospel. It has three stanzas each having ὁ λόγος "the Word" in focus.

The Meaning of λόγος

When the dust finally cleared on the nineteenth century controversy over whether the meaning of the word *logos* is to be sought in ancient Greek philosophy or in the Old Testament and in early Judaism, it became clear the John was referring to Jesus as the "Word of the Lord" mentioned so many times in the Old Testament, the Targums, and in other early Jewish works. Hendriksen concludes, "It is rooted not in Greek but in Semitic thought."⁷¹ Modern commentators agree with him.⁷²

The nineteenth century liberals had tried to inject an element of philosophic sophistication into John's use of the *logos* which was nothing more than eisegeses on their part. They forgot that John was a simple man writing to a simple people and not to Greek philosophers. John's point is quite simple: Just as your words reveal what is in your mind, even so the pre-incarnate Word is the revelation of the mind of the Father (John 1:18).

Of course, there are those who are still caught in a nineteenth century time warp and think that John was referring to pagan Greek concepts of the *Logos*. They have yet to read the Targums or the Dead Sea Scrolls. They need to break free from the erroneous pre-archeological speculations of nineteenth century German rationalism.

In the Beginning Was the Word

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος

We have already demonstrated that the first phrase, refers to the eternal pre-existence of the Word. Godet explains:

The imperfect ἦν, *was*, must designate, according to the ordinary meaning of the tense, the simultaneousness of the act indicated by the verb with some other act. This simultaneousness is here that of the *existence* of the Word with the fact designated by the word *beginning*. "When everything which has begun began, the Word *was*." Alone then, it did not begin; the Word was already. Now that which did not begin with *things*, that is to say, with time, the form of the development of things, belongs to the eternal order . . . The idea of this first proposition is, therefore, that of the eternity of the Logos.⁷³

The modern Greek scholar Randy Yeager concludes:

Thus the Word existed *before* the beginning, since He has always existed. With Him there is no beginning. He is eternal and everlasting. . . . It is impossible to avoid the force of John's grammar.⁷⁴

Since the deity of the Word is already established in the first phrase of John 1:1, the next two phrases in this hymn to the deity of Christ expand upon what has already been established:

. . . and the Word was with God

καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν

John 1:1 describes the *relationship* of the Word first to the Creation and then to the Father. When we think of the relationship between the Word and the Creation, the Word is not a part of the Creation because He existed "*before*" it. And since He is "*before*" it, He is not "*with*" it. Since the Word is not "*with*" the Creation, then He must be "*with*" the Father from all eternity. John's logic is simple and straight forward on this point.

John's use of the preposition πρὸς "*with*" is significant. It implies that the Father and the Son had an intimate as well as eternal relationship. Lenski explains:

The preposition πρὸς, as distinct from ἕως, παρὰ, and σὺν, is of the greatest importance. . . . The idea is that of presence and

communion with a strong note of reciprocity. The Logos, then, is not an attribute inferring in God, or a power emanating from him, but a person in the presence of God and turned in loving, inseparable communion toward God and God turned equally toward him. He was another and yet not other than God.⁷⁵

John's use of the preposition *πρὸς* is also significant in that it shows that he did not view the Logos and the Father as being the same person. They are two distinct persons in an intimate eternal relationship of fellowship and communion.

In the biblical world and life view, there are only two realities: The Creator or the Creation (Gen. 1:1). The two are qualitatively and quantitatively distinct from one another. The following chart illustrates the differences between the two:

The Creator	The Creation
infinite	finite
eternal	temporal
omnipresent	limited in presence
omnipotent	limited in power
omniscient	limited in knowledge
immutable	mutable
perfect	imperfect

Under which column do we put the Father, angels, man, rocks, etc.?

The Creator	The Creation
the Father	angels, man, rocks, etc.

Angels, man, rocks, etc., are not put under the left column "with" the Father. If we made the mistake of putting them "with" the Father, they would be have to be God as much as He is. No, they have to be placed "with" all other created things under the right column.

Where do we put the pre-incarnate Word? Under which column? Do we put Him "with" the Father or "with" angels, man, rocks, etc? Does He belong under the Creator column or under the Creation column?

In the second phrase of John 1:1, John clearly places the pre-incarnate Word under the Creator column *πρὸς* "with" the Father:

The Creator**The Creation**

the Father
the Word

angels, man, rocks, etc.

Given the grammar of the Greek text and the verses which follow, we have to place the pre-incarnate Logos “with” the Father under the column marked “the Creator.” That this is true is seen from verse 3.

All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. (John 1:3)

πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο
οὐδὲ ἓν. ὃ γέγονεν

With this said, let us now examine John 1:1c.

... and the Word was God.

... καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

Since the deity of the Logos was already set forth in the first two phrases of the hymn, the third phrase should not be that difficult to accept. Indeed, the hymn has been building to the climax “the Word was *GOD*.”

In Greek syntax, when you want to emphasize a word, you take it out of its normal word order and put it as the first word of the sentence. This is particularly true with the New Testament because it was intended to be read outloud.

This is the exact situation with John 1:1c.⁷⁶ When you read John 1:1 outloud, you should emphasize the word “GOD” by raising your voice. Instead of “the **Word** was God,” the word order of the Greek text is “**God** was the Word.”

John assumed that the reader would put the emphasis on the word “GOD” as the climax of the hymn: “the Word was **God**.” Any attempt to water down the word θεὸς “God” into something less than true deity is due to a failure to observe the syntax. It would be anti-climactic to say that the Logos was “a god.”

Why No Article Before θεός

The word θεός in John 1:1c does not have a definite article in front of it. This does not mean that we should follow the Jehovah's Witnesses and downsize it to "a god." We have already pointed out that the word "Father" is modified by θεός without the article. Do the Arians downsize Him into "a god" because of this? No. Then on what grounds do they do this to Christ?

The article was not placed in front of θεός for two very good reasons. First, in terms of Greek grammar and syntax, Colwell's Rule 20 states that when a noun is taken out its normal word order and placed *before* its verb, 97% of the time it does not have an article.⁷⁷ This is what we find in John 1:1c.

What this means is that instead of beginning with the *a priori* assumption that θεός should have the article and then seeking to explain why it does not have one, we should begin the other way around and assume that it should not normally have the article. Thus, anyone who thinks that it should have the article will have to justify that assumption.

The second reason θεός does not have the article is that it would lead the reader to the mistaken idea that the Word was the Father. Murray Harris explains:

Having just distinguished the Logos (the Son) from ὁ θεός in verse 1b, would he be likely immediately afterward to dissolve that personal distinction? For him to have used ὁ θεός in the predicate of verse 1c would have implied either that subject and predicate were identical or coextensive or that this predicate referred to none other than the ὁ θεός of the preceding clause. As it is, in verse 1c John maintains the distinction between the Logos and the Father that he has drawn in verse 1b, while at the same time affirming the participation of the Logos in the divine essence (ὁ θεός).⁷⁸

John did not place the article ὁ in front of θεός in order to maintain the distinction between the Father and the Son. This is why he made that distinction once again in John 1:2.

He Was in the Beginning with God

οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.

The futile attempts of nineteenth century liberals to dilute the meaning of θεός in John 1:1c down to something less than true deity or to reduce it to the mild adjective “divine” were successfully refuted by the best Greek scholars of that day. Arian cults, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Way International, The Assemblies of Yahweh, etc., are the only ones who still use old nineteenth century arguments as if they were still valid.

John 1:18

No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.

θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν
εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.

John 1:18 may be part of the same ancient hymn which John started quoting in verse 1. As such, it is very important to our understanding of the early Church’s doctrine of the deity of Christ. Murray Harris comments:

Probably no verse has a more strategic position in the Fourth Gospel than 1:18, looking back as it does over the Prologue from its peak and also forward to the expansive plain of the Gospel narrative. Of crucial import, therefore is the interpretation of this verse and, in particular, the determination of its original text.⁷⁹

In the nineteenth century, before the discovery of the multitude of manuscripts we have available today, liberal scholars fought long and hard to avoid the reading “unique God” (μονογενὴς θεός). They did not want or need another New Testament text which called Jesus Jeos. But as the manuscript evidence began to mount in its favor, even Marcus Dods reluctantly admitted, “The MS authority favours the reading θεός.”⁸⁰

Today, after the manuscript evidence has overwhelmed any lingering doubts, Lenski could state:

The question of the true reading is no longer in doubt. It is μονογενὴς θεός and not ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός, nor ὁ μονογενὴς without a substantive.⁸¹

Modern commentators agree with Lenski. Hendriksen comments:

The reading the only begotten God (μονογενὴς θεὸς) instead of the only begotten Son is supported by the best and oldest manuscripts.⁸²

With the discovery of the Bodmer papyri which must be dated no later than 200 A.D., it can no longer be doubted that μονογενὴς θεὸς was the true reading of the original text. The greatest Greek scholar of the twentieth century was without a doubt A.T. Robertson. After investigating all the manuscript evidence, he concludes:

The best old Greek manuscripts (Aleph B C L) read *monogenes theos* (God only begotten) which is undoubtedly the true text. Probably some scribe changed it to *ho monogenes huios* to obviate the blunt statement of the deity of Christ and to make it like 3:16. But there is an inner harmony in the reading of the old uncials. The Logos is plainly called *theos* in verse 1. The Incarnation is stated in verse 14, where he is also termed *monogenes*. He was that before the Incarnation. So he is "God only begotten."⁸³

The only ones who do not admit that μονογενὴς θεὸς is the true reading of the Greek text are Arian cults who still depend almost exclusively on nineteenth century anti-Trinitarian writers.

It is thought by many modern scholars that John 1:18 is a part of the ancient hymn John is quoting. Having proclaimed the Logos "God" in verse 1 and incarnate in verse 14, the hymn now proclaims Him the "unique God" in verse 18.⁸⁴

John 1:18 No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.

θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ
ᾧν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος
ἐξηγήσατο.

John now states that the Logos ὁ ᾧν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς "is in the bosom of the Father." The tense of the verb and the preposition he uses to describe the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son should be noted. The verb ᾧν is the present participle of εἰμί and clearly indicates a timeless, i.e., eternal quality to the Logos' relationship to the Father. As Lenski points out:

These are the assured grammatical facts regarding ὁ ὢν, which we should not yield when they are modified in the interest of a wrong view of the person who is truly "God Only-begotten."⁸⁵

The use of the present participle to indicate a timeless relationship between the Father and the Son has been noted by many other commentators.⁸⁶ John's choice of εἰς instead of ἐν is also to be noted.

The Charge of Blasphemy

"For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out *to be* God."
(John 10:33)

ἀπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, Περὶ καλοῦ ἔργου
οὐ λιθάζομέν σε ἀλλὰ περὶ βλασφημίας, καὶ ὅτι σὺ
ἄνθρωπος ὢν ποιεῖς σεαυτὸν θεόν.

Often overlooked when discussing passages where the word θεός is applied to Jesus, the accusation of blasphemy is quite significant.

When Jesus said in verse 30, "I and the Father, we are One," the Jews rightly understood that He was saying that that He and the Father were one in nature and essence. The Jews logically deduced from this that Jesus was claiming to be God. Lenski comments:

This, however, the sharp ears of these Jews at once caught, that by saying, "I and the Father, we are one," Jesus was making himself God. They caught this because it was exactly what they wanted, a word on which to base the charge of blasphemy and thus full justification for the summary inflection of the death penalty. . . . This Jewish charge of blasphemy must stand against Jesus to this day if he, being nothing but a man, either by implication or by some direct statement (here or elsewhere) made himself God.⁸⁷

The words in the original are quite striking. The charge was blasphemy (βλασφημίας). This is the only time John used the word in his Gospel. The charge of blasphemy could be leveled only if Jesus was claiming to be the one true God of Israel. The contrast is, thus, not between paganism (a false god) and Judaism (the true God) but between man and God.

The crime of blasphemy was punishable by death according to Leviticus 24:16. In that passage the crime has to do with the misuse of the name Yahweh. Thus, it is the one true God which is in view and not pagan gods.⁸⁸ Marcus Dods concludes:

It was blasphemy for a man to claim to be God. And it is noteworthy that Jesus never manifests indignation when charged with making Himself God; yet were He a mere man no one could view this sin with stronger abhorrence.⁸⁹

This passage is exactly what Trinitarians expect to find in the New Testament. If Jesus claimed to be God, then the unbelieving Jews would have picked up on this. They would object and charge Him with blasphemy.

On the other hand, if Jesus never claimed to be God, then we would not expect to find the charge of blasphemy leveled against Jesus. The expectations of Trinitarians are fully satisfied while the anti-Trinitarians have to scramble to find ways to wiggle out of such passages.

Thomas' Great Confession

Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"
(John 20:28)

ἀπεκρίθη Θωμᾶς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, 'Ο κύριός μου καὶ
ὁ θεός μου.

Faced with irrefutable proof that Jesus had been bodily raised from the dead, he concluded that Jesus was God. The Greek text is quite clear that Thomas was addressing Jesus when he said unto him, "My Lord and my God!"

This passage is without a doubt where Arianism meets its greatest defeat. The Greek text is free from variant readings. The word ὁ θεός has the definite article in front of it. The phrase is introduced by the words "he said *unto Him*" (εἶπεν αὐτῷ) which means that the statement "My Lord and my God!" is addressed to Jesus. The grammar of the Greek is clear.⁹⁰ The form of address is in the vocative case. Robertson even uses John 20:28 as an example of the vocative in his Greek grammar and concludes:

When Thomas said 'Ο κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου (John 20:28), he gave Christ full acceptance of his deity and of the fact of his resurrection.⁹¹

There is even an Old Testament precedent in Psalm 35:24 (LXX. Ps. 34:23)

Judge me, O LORD my God, according to Thy righteousness;
And do not let them rejoice over me. (Psalm 35:24)

κρίνόν με κατὰ τὴν δικαιοσύνην σου κύριε ὁ θεός
μου καὶ μὴ ἐπιχαρείσάν μοι

Since this psalm clearly has Yahweh in view (1:1), any attempt to interpret the words as indicating anything less than true deity would put Yahweh in jeopardy.

The nineteenth century liberal answer was to omit translating the words εἶπεν αὐτῷ "unto Him" and turn Thomas' vocative address to Jesus into a blasphemous exclamation. They claimed that Thomas was so surprised by the appearance of the resurrected Jesus that he uttered a first century version of the modern day blasphemy "O my God!" But the grammar of the text is clearly against such a idea. The famous Church historian Philip Schaff points out

The Socinian view is worse than absurd, it turns an act of adoration into an irrelevant and profane exclamation unrebuked by the Lord! There is no instance of such profane use of the name of God in exclamations.⁹²

Marcus Dods agrees:

The words are not a mere exclamation of surprise. This is forbidden by εἶπεν αὐτῷ; they mean "Thou art my Lord and my God." The repeated pronoun lends emphasis.⁹³

We must remember that first century Jews did not go around using God's name in vain as people do so flippantly today. To insert a modern form of blasphemy into a first century text is not exegesis but eisegesis.

Most liberals now admit that Jesus is called God by Thomas. Even Bultmann admitted, "Jesus is undoubtedly designated or more exactly, addressed as God."⁹⁴ The liberal Catholic theologian Raymond Brown admits:

Here Jesus is addressed as God (ho theos mou), with the articular nominative serving as a vocative.⁹⁶

Once again, the only ones trying to carry on the nineteenth century blasphemy argument are modern day Arian cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses or a few old-fashioned liberals who seem to be totally unaware of modern scholarship within their own camp.

John's Gospel begins with the statement that the pre-incarnate Christ was God (John 1:1). It continues that theme by showing that He claimed to be God during His ministry (John 10:30-33). It then ends with Him worshipped as God by the disciples (John 20:28). Could anything be clearer?

The Blood of God

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. (Acts 20:28)

προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς καὶ παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ, ἐν ᾧ
ὑμᾶς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους
ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἣν
περιποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου.

It never ceases to amaze us that Arians will ignore the established rules of textual criticism whenever those rules support Trinitarianism. For example, one well established rule is that the more difficult or controversial the reading, the more likely it was the original text.

Why do we say this? If you were given the responsibility of copying the text of Scripture, what would think when you came to some words which seemed strange or controversial to you? Would you not be tempted to think that the scribe before you must have made a slip of the pen and that you should replace the difficult reading with simple or non-controversial wording?

The reverse rule is just as obvious. If the wording of a text is quite simple and straightforward, would there be any reason for you to make it difficult or odd? No. We all naturally want to make things go from the difficult to the simple, from the strange to the familiar. And this is why there are nine variant readings in Acts 20:28. They came from the natural desire of scribes to correct what was perceived by them to be mistakes made by the scribes before them.

The two rules mentioned above are well established and utilized by all scholars. Acts 20:28 is a classic example of this process. As we approach the text, Murray Harris reminds us:

There can be no objection (on broad *a priori* grounds) to understanding the verse to refer to Jesus, for elsewhere the NT refers to Jesus as θεός and depicts him as acquiring the church through his death.⁹⁶

Of course, as we have repeatedly emphasized, anti-Trinitarians begin with the *a priori* assumption that Jesus is not called θεός “God” in the New Testament. Thus, when they are confronted with texts which contradict that assumption, they will often ignore the normal rules of textual criticism.

It is important to point out that the doctrine of the Trinity is not jeopardized if “the church of the *Lord*” is found to be the best reading. Trinitarians are happy either way because neither “God” nor “Lord” threaten their belief system. They have the luxury of following the textual evidence to an objective conclusion.

On the other hand, Arians do have a tremendous problem if “the church of *God*” ends up being the best reading. The phrase “the church of *God*” in and of itself is not controversial. But if it is the best reading, then the pronoun “his” in the next phrase (“*his* own blood”) would grammatically have to refer to the immediate antecedent which is “God.”

This would mean that *God shed his blood for us*. Since this is surely a reference to Jesus, then He is here called θεός. Thus, the belief system of the Arians is jeopardized if θεός is allowed to stand. They have to support “Lord” instead of “God” for theological reasons instead of following the normal rules of textual criticism.

All the critical evidence is in favor of the words “the church of *God*” (τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ). This is now supported by nearly all modern textual critics, grammarians, commentators, and translators.⁹⁷ Since they all go into great detail on the manuscript evidence, we will not do so here. The reason there was so much controversy over this text in the nineteenth century is explained by Heinrich Meyer:

With the reading τοῦ θεοῦ this passage was a peculiarly important *locus* for the doctrine of the divinity of Christ and the *communicatio idiomatum* against the Socinians.⁹⁸

The Socinians and their descendants the Unitarians did their best to defuse this text before it blew up in their faces. But in the end, they had to admit that “God” and not “Lord” was no doubt the original reading.

How did the variant readings arise? Given the fact that the word θεός would imply that Paul is referring to “the blood of God,” some scribes replaced the word θεός with the word κύριος “Lord” because they felt that it would be more *normal* to speak of the “blood of the Lord [Jesus].” Also, the word θεός might give the wrong idea that the Father’s blood was shed. Raymond Brown explains:

One very plausible reason why some scribes may have changed “God” to “Lord” is that a reading which has God shedding blood seems to smack of Patripassianism.⁹⁹

Patripassianism is the ancient heresy which says that the Father died for our sins on the cross. In order to avoid this heresy, some scribes replaced “God” with “Lord.”

The same holds for the variant readings for the phrase “with his own blood.” Which is more likely? Would a scribe be more likely to change the wording from “with his [i.e., God’s] blood” to “with the blood of His own [Son]” or to change “with the blood of His own [Son]” to “with his [i.e., God’s] blood”? Obviously, the more difficult and controversial reading would be “with his [i.e., God’s] blood.”

There would be no reason to change a statement about the blood of Jesus as this is referred to elsewhere in the New Testament (Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 1:7, etc.). But to speak of the “blood of God” would seem strange. Thus the propensity to change the strange to the familiar and the controversial to the non-controversial would favor “with his own blood” as the original text instead of “by the blood of his own [Son].”

This is further confirmed by the numerous references to “the blood of God” in the Apostolic Fathers. They clearly derived the phrase from Acts 20:28.¹⁰⁰ Given all the evidence, Yeager rightly concludes, “Jesus Christ our Lord, is here called God.”¹⁰¹

Over All, God Blessed Forever

whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. (Rom. 9:5)

ὧν οἱ πατέρες καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ
σάρκα· ὁ ὧν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς
αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.

Although there are no significant variant readings, this is the most discussed text on the subject of the deity of Christ. It is so controversial because if it is a doxology to Christ, then not only is Jesus here referred to

as θεός but He is also here *worshipped* as God! It is the *doxological* factor that drives the anti-Trinitarians into a frenzy.

Arians can handle a few scattered references to Christ as θεός as long as they can be reduced to “a god.” But a doxology is clearly an act of worship to true deity. Thus, a doxology to Christ as God cannot be reduced to anything less than the worship of true deity. This is why a storm of criticism broke out on this text in the nineteenth century.

Today, most commentators, grammarians, exegetes, etc., have come to the conclusion that Romans 9:5 is a doxology to Christ as God.¹⁰² If the sentence had been found in a secular writer of the first or second century, there would be no controversy over its translation or punctuation. As Canon Liddon in his Bampton lectures at Oxford University points out, a doxology to Christ as God:

is the natural sense of the passage. If the passage occurred in a profane author and its essence and structure alone had to be considered, few critics would think of overlooking the antithesis between ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα and θεὸς εὐλογητὸς. Still less possible would it be to destroy this antithesis outright, and to impoverish the climax of the whole passage, by cutting off the doxology from the clause which precedes it, and so erecting it into an independent ascription of praise to God the Father.¹⁰³

We translate the Greek text as follows:

and from whom, as far as his human nature is concerned, is the Messiah, who is sovereign over all things, God blessed forever. Amen.

As we have already pointed out, the working assumption which underlies this text is the dual nature of the Messiah. Hendriksen comments:

This item serves as a fitting climax. From *them*, that is, from *the Israelites* (see verse 4) Christ derived his human nature. He was and is a Jew. What a source of intense satisfaction and rejoicing this *should be* for Jews! The apostle hastens to add that although Jesus is indeed a Jew, he is also much more than a Jew. Though he has a human nature, he also has a divine nature. He is God! It should be clear that when Paul says, “Christ, who is over all God blest forever,” he confesses Christ’s deity.¹⁰⁴

In his *Word Studies*, A.T. Robertson writes:

A clear statement of the deity of Christ following the remark about his humanity. This is the natural and the obvious way of punctuating the sentence. To make a full stop after *sarka* (or colon) and start a new sentence for the doxology is very abrupt and awkward. See Acts 20:28 and Titus 2:13 for Paul's use of *theos* applied to Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁵

That this is the correct interpretation is based on the following considerations:

1. As we have already documented, the Messiah was called God in the intertestamental Jewish literature. Thus, it was perfectly in accord with contemporary Jewish thought for Paul to refer to the Messiah as God.
2. There is a clear contrast in the verse between the human and divine natures of the Messiah. He was a Jew according to the flesh. But He was also the King of the universe and thus God blessed forever.
3. The words ὁ ὢν "who is" must grammatically refer back to the immediate antecedent which is ὁ Χριστός "the Christ." The Princeton theologian Charles Hodge comments:

The relative *who* must agree with the nearest antecedent. There is no other subject in the context sufficiently prominent to make a departure from this ordinary rule, in this case, even plausible.¹⁰⁶

Dean Alford points out, "The rendering . . . is the only one admissible by the rules of grammar and arrangement."¹⁰⁷ Raymond Brown comments:

This interpretation would mean that Paul calls Jesus God. From a grammatical viewpoint this is clearly the best reading. Also, the contextual sequence is excellent; for having spoken of Jesus' descent according to the flesh, Paul now emphasizes his position as God.¹⁰⁸

4. Not once in the New Testament did Paul or anyone else ever insert a doxology into a text without first introducing the Person who was the object of that doxology.¹⁰⁹

5. When Paul would break into a section with a doxology to the Father, he would first introduce the Father into the text before giving the doxology. The Father is nowhere introduced into the text.¹¹⁰

6. The words ἐπὶ πάντων "over all" refer to One who is sovereign over all things. It was Paul's habit to speak of Christ as the Lord of all things.¹¹¹ (see: Rom. 10:12; 14:9; Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:9-11, etc.). In fact, Paul taught that it was Christ who created and upholds all things by His sovereign power (Col. 1:16-17).

7. The words ἐπὶ πάντων by themselves prove the deity of Christ. Lenski comments:

Christ is over all, i.e., the supreme Lord. This apposition is complete in itself. If no more were added, this apposition makes Christ God, for we have yet to hear of one who is "over all" and is not God.¹¹²

8. Paul did not place the word εὐλογητὸς before the word θεὸς as if he stopped writing and looked up to heaven and exclaimed, "Blessed be God!" Instead Paul put the word "blessed" after the word "God" and wrote θεὸς εὐλογητὸς. This means that he is identifying Christ as the God whom we bless.¹¹³

9. The testimony of the early Church is fully in favor of the orthodox interpretation of the text. The older commentators such as Alford, Godet, etc., and modern writers such as Faccio demonstrate that the early church Fathers applied Romans 9:5 to Christ and not to God the Father. Faccio in particular refutes those Arians who claim that Romans 9:5 was applied to God the Father.¹¹⁴ Sad to say, some modern Arians are still convoluting the evidence and need to be corrected on this point once again.

10. Lastly, some Arians have gone so far as to rewrite the Greek text, to rearrange the words, and to invent novel punctuation without any manuscript evidence whatsoever. Their actions only reveal how devastating Romans 9:5 is to their belief system. The nineteenth century Scottish commentator Robert Haldane wrote in his own day:

The awful blindness and obstinacy of Arians and Socinians in their explanations, or rather perversions, of the Word of God, are in nothing more obvious than in their attempts to evade the meaning of this celebrated testimony to the Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ. They

often shelter themselves under various readings; but here they have no tenable ground for an evasion of this kind. Yet, strange to say, some of them have, without the authority of manuscripts, alter the original, in order that it may suit their purpose. There is no difficulty in the words—no intricacy in the construction; yet, by a forced construction and an unnatural punctuation, they have endeavored to turn away this testimony from its obvious import. Contrary to the genius and idiom of the Greek—contrary to all the usual rules of interpreting language, as had often been incontrovertibly shown—they substitute “God be blessed”. . . . Such tortuous explanations are not only rejected by a sound interpretation of the original, but manifest themselves to be unnatural, even to the most illiterate who exercises an unprejudiced judgment.¹¹⁵

The Essence of God

Christ, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, (Phil. 2:5b-6)

ὁς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν ἡγήσατο
τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ,

Once again we are dealing with what may be an ancient Aramaic hymn sung to Christ as God. In this hymn, the deity of Christ is confirmed in two ways. Not only is the word θεός applied to Christ, but His equality with the Father is also confirmed. The Greek text literally reads:

. . . who being and remaining to be in essence God, did not regard His equality with God as something to take advantage of.

This passage was hotly debated for over two centuries and the literature on it is quite extensive. Given the confines of this chapter, we can only summarize the results of our research which covered much of this literature:

1. The verb ὑπάρχων is a present active participle and means that Jesus was “the essence of God” not only *before* His incarnation but *after* it as well. At no point before or after His incarnation did Jesus cease to be the

essence of God. As Rienecker and Rogers point out, "The word [ὑπάρχων] expresses continuance of an antecedent state or condition."¹¹⁶ Hendriksen explains:

The present participle ὑπάρχων stands in sharp contrast with all the aorists which follow it, and therefore points in the direction of continuance of being: Christ Jesus was and is eternally "in the form of God."¹¹⁷

Before His descent from heaven, Jesus Christ was the essence of God. *During* His time on earth, He was the essence of God. *After* His ascension back to heaven, He was the essence of God. And *today* Jesus is still the essence of God. As Wuest points out, this is the impact of Paul's use of the present participle.¹¹⁸

The Kenosis Theory

The nineteenth century Kenosis controversy would have never happened if the Unitarians would have begun with the significance of the present participle ὑπάρχων.¹¹⁹ Instead, they fixated on the phrase, "emptied Himself" and mistakenly thought that these words meant that Jesus "emptied himself" of His deity at His incarnation. But this erroneous idea is exactly what Paul deliberately tried to avoid when he used the present participle.

2. The words ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ "in essence God" are really quite simple and straightforward because Paul was not writing to Greek philosophers but to common believers at Philippi. Thus there is no justification for the attempt to read the concepts of Plato and other Greek philosophers into the words ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ.

Since the word μορφῇ was used in the Septuagint,¹²⁰ it has an Old Testament, i.e., Semitic, background. As the author of *The Expositor's Greek Testament* points out:

In LXX μορφῇ denotes the form, appearance, look or likeness of someone, that by which those beholding him would judge him. . . the word had come, in later Greek, to receive a vague, general meaning, far removed from the accurate, metaphysical content which belonged to it in writers like Plato and Aristotle. It seems, therefore, to us of little value . . . to discuss

the relation of μορφή to terms such as ἵχε, φύσες, εἶδος in their philosophical refinements. It is far more probable that Paul uses μορφή, here “in a loose, popular sense, as we use ‘nature’” (Guardian, Jan. 1, 1896). He means, of course, in the strictest sense that the pre-existing Christ was Divine. For μορφή always signifies a form which truly and fully expresses the being which underlies it.¹²¹

After all the word studies of μορφή and the contrasts made between it and the word σχήματι “fashion” found in verse 7, nearly all commentators now agree that the word μορφή refers to the inner essence or nature of something while σχήματι refers only to the outward appearance.¹²²

J.B. Lightfoot: “μορφή implies not the external accidents but the essential attributes.”¹²³

R.C. Trench: “. . . none could be ἐν μορφή θεοῦ who was not God . . . μορφή, like the Latin “forma,” the German “gestalt” signifies the form as it is the utterance of the inner life; not “being,” but “mode of being” or better, “mode of existence”; and only God could have the mode of existence of God.”¹²⁴

A.T. Robertson: “Morphe means the essential attributes as shown in the form. In his preincarnate state Christ possessed the attributes of God and so appeared to those in heaven who saw him. Here is a clear statement by Paul of the deity of Christ.”¹²⁵

M.R. Vincent: “Μορφή is identified with *the essence* of a person or thing: σχήματι *fashion* is an accident which may change without affecting the *form*. . . . As applied here to God, the word [μορφή] is intended to describe that mode in which the essential being of God expresses itself. . . . To say, then, that Christ was in *the form of God*, is to say that He existed as essentially one with God. The expression of deity through human nature (verse 7) thus has its background in the expression of deity as *deity* in the eternal ages of God's being.”¹²⁶

W. Hendriksen: “. . . morphe or form refers to the inner, essential, and abiding nature of a person or thing, while schema or fashion points to his or its external, accidental, and fleeting bearing or appearance. What Paul is saying then, here in Phil. 2:6 is that Christ Jesus had always been (and always continues to be) God by nature, the

express image of the Deity. The specific character of the Godhead as this is expressed in all the divine attributes was and is his eternally."¹²⁷

3. The translation of the words οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, has been a source of much controversy. Our own conclusion after many years of research is that Paul was not speaking of "equality with God" as a prize which Jesus Christ could have grasped, but failed to do so. Neither was "equality with God" something which He gave up when He became incarnate. Paul's use of the present participle ὑπάρχων forbids any attempt to deny Him equality with God before or after His incarnation.

The words are actually an *idiomatic* expression signifying that although Jesus was and remained to be equal with God (being in nature the very essence of deity), He did not take advantage of this situation but was willing to be incarnate as a human being and to die for us on the cross.¹²⁸ N.T. Wright explains:

The idiom here used clearly assumes that the object in question—in this case equality with God—is already possessed. One cannot decide to take advantage of something one does not already have. If, therefore, there is to be any ultimate distinction of meaning between Christ's being in the form of God and Christ possessing τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, such a distinction does not, at least, involve seeing either phrase as referring to something less than divinity and/or the honors pertaining to that state.¹²⁹

Rienecker and Rogers put it this way:

Christ did not use His equality with God in order to snatch or gain power and dominion, riches, pleasure, worldly glory.¹³⁰

4. The next verse has the phrase "He emptied Himself." This has been often misunderstood. A comparison between the English and the Greek would be helpful.

Phil. 2:7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.

ἀλλὰ ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβών,
ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος·

In contrast to the present participle, Paul now uses the aorist tense to refer to the incarnation as an completed act.¹³¹ Jesus laid aside His glory and took upon Himself the form of a servant, being found in σχήματι “fashion” as a man. “The word [σχήματι] was used of a king who exchanged his kingly robe for sackcloth.”¹³²

5. Second Corinthians 8:9 is a parallel passage to Philippians 2:5-7.¹³³ Our translation of this verse is as follows:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for you He became poor while *being and remaining to be* rich, that you through His poverty might become rich.

γινώσκετε γὰρ τὴν χάριν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅτι δι’ ὑμᾶς ἐπτώχευσεν
πλούσιος ὢν, ἵνα ὑμεῖς τῇ ἐκείνου πτωχείᾳ
πλουτήσητε.

Paul did not use the aorist tense to say that Christ “was” at one time rich, but was no longer rich. Instead, he used the word ὢν which is a present participle. Greek grammarians have pointed out that the use of the present participle in such cases is concessive.¹³⁴ One example is found in Hebrews 5:8. The New American Standard Bible translates it as:

Although He *was* a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.

καίπερ ὢν υἱὸς, ἔμαθεν ἀφ’ ὧν ἔπαθεν τὴν
ὑπακοήν,

Did Jesus cease to be the Son of God when He learned obedience? No. Paul would have had to use the aorist to say that. Instead, he used the present participle ὢν to indicate that while *being and remaining to be* the Son of God, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. His suffering is all the more wondrous because He was the royal Son throughout His life.

In the same way, when Paul used the present participle ὄν in II Corinthians 8:9 he is saying that *while being and remaining to be rich*, Jesus did not take advantage of His riches but He willingly lived as a poor man for us. Thus the mental picture is not that of a rich man who lost all his money and became poor, but that of a rich man who, while remaining rich, did not take advantage of those riches, but lived among us as a poor man.

This is why the use of the present participle in Philipians 2:6 "being and remaining to be in essence God" is so important. The Son of God did not empty Himself of His deity as some nineteenth century Unitarians mistakenly thought. Most modern liberals as well as conservatives now accept the orthodox interpretation as the obvious grammatical meaning of the text. Rienecker and Roger comment:

The word does not mean He emptied Himself of His deity, but rather, He emptied Himself of the display of His deity for personal gain. The word is a graphic expression of the completeness of His self-renunciation and His refusal to use what He had to His own advantage.¹³⁵

The point of the Apostle is not what Christ could have become or could have gained if He wanted. But, rather, Christ did not take advantage of His deity, *which was always His by nature*. I Howard Marshall comments:

The point is, not that Christ gave up any divine attributes, but simply that he did not behave as one who was equal with God might have been expected to behave, but as a humble servant.¹³⁶

The deity of Christ and His dual natures are both clearly in view in this ancient hymn.

Our God and Lord Jesus Christ

In order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ. II (Thes. 1:12)

ὅπως ἐνδοξασθῇ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν αὐτῷ, κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Most English versions follow the KJV in making a distinction between God and Christ by adding the article "the" in front of the word "Lord." Thus, in most translations it reads, "our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." But the Greek text is quite straightforward that the θεός "God" referred to is none other than Jesus Christ:

τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

our God and Lord Jesus Christ

There are three different issues:

1. Does the Granville Sharp rule apply to this text?
2. Did Paul have in mind one or two persons?
3. Did he call Jesus θεός as well as κυρίος?

The Granville Sharp rule states that when two nouns of the same case are separated by the word καί, with the first noun having the article in front of it, but the second noun without the article, only one person is in view and is, thus, being described by both nouns. In contrast, when both nouns have a definite article, then two persons are in view. There are many New Testament passages which would not make any sense whatsoever if this rule was not observed.¹³⁷

But does this rule apply when the nouns in question are names or titles such as θεός? Some commentators have answered in the negative.¹³⁸ But there are many passages whose interpretation would be impossible unless we applied Sharp's rule to them. For example, in Luke 20:37 the word θεός appears once with the article and then two times without the article.

The God of Abraham and God of Isaac and God of Jacob

τὸν θεὸν Ἀβραάμ καὶ θεὸν Ἰσαὰκ καὶ θεὸν Ἰακώβ.

The absence of the article before the second and third occurrence of the word θεὸν in reference to "God of Isaac" and "God of Jacob" means that there is only *one* God in view, "*the* God of Abraham." Thus, the God of Isaac and Jacob was not a different God from the God of Abraham. Clearly Sharp's rule is needed to interpret this text.

For this reason, most Greek grammarians have stated that Jesus is called both God and Lord in II Thessalonians 1:12.¹³⁹ We, thus, arrive at an interesting situation where the grammarians disagree with the majority of

commentators who mainly for theological reasons do not want to follow a strict grammatical interpretation of the Greek text.

As A.T. Robertson points out, Winer “bases his objection on doctrinal grounds, a matter that does not *per se* concern the grammarian.”¹⁴⁰ Examples of modern commentators allowing their theology to control the meaning of a text instead of the context or grammar are not hard to find.¹⁴¹

It should be the other way around. If we do not allow the grammar of the text to dictate our theology, we will end up arguing in a circle. Princeton’s B. B. Warfield explains:

It will probably be allowed that in strictness of grammatical rule, rigidly applied, this should mean, “according to the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ,” or if we choose so to phrase it, “according to the grace of our God, even the Lord Jesus Christ.” All sorts of reasons are advanced, however, why the strict grammatical rule should not be rigidly applied here. Most of them are ineffective enough and testify only to the reluctance of expositors to acknowledge that Paul can speak of Christ as God. . . . This “exegetical uncertainty” is in each case imposed upon the passage by reluctance to take it in the sense which it most naturally bears, and which is exegetically immediately given. . . . The reason is distinctly circular which denies to each of these passages in turn its natural meaning on the ground of lack of supporting usage, when this lack of supporting usage is created by a similar denial on the same ground of its natural meaning to each of the other passages. The ground of the denial in each case is merely the denial in the other cases. Mean-while the usage is there, and is not thus to be denied away. If it may be, any usage whatever may be destroyed in the same manner. In these circumstances there seems no reason why the ordinary laws of grammar should not determine our understanding of II Thess. i. 12.¹⁴²

Warfield is not the only scholar who believes that II Thess. 1:12 calls Jesus both God and Lord. Note the following comments:

A.T. Robertson: Here strict syntax requires, since there is only one article with *theou* and *kuriou* that one person be meant, Jesus Christ, as is certainly true in Titus 2:13; II Pet. 1:1.¹⁴³

Schmiedel: grammar demands that one person be meant.¹⁴⁴

Lenski: Those who think that two persons are referred to, God and Christ, are sometimes governed by dogmatical interests, namely by their claim that Christ is never called God, at least not in such a direct way. For us no dogmatical interest is involved; it makes no difference whether Christ is here called God or not, elsewhere he is called God and is shown to be God. We thus have only a linguistic interest, and this is strongly in favor of one person, for one article (τοῦ) unites both nouns.¹⁴⁵

Lange: Since the article stands before θεοῦ, and not before κυρίου, it is altogether most natural with Hofmann, to refer θεοῦ also to Christ without this being, as Hilgenfeld supposes, a mark of spuriousness; for not merely Tit. ii. 13, but also Rom. ix. 5 speaks to our Christ in loftier terms than are agreeable to our modern critics (Compare John xx. 28; 2 Pet. i. 1, 11). The distinction between God and Christ is not to be sustained by an appeal to texts like vv. 1 and 2, since there the article is wanting also before θεῶ, and θεοῦ.¹⁴⁶

Even the liberal theologian Bultmann had to bow before the grammar of the text and admit that it calls Christ God!¹⁴⁷ Dr. Kenneth Wuest, one of the best Greek scholars of the twentieth century, renders the phrase in his *Expanded Translation* as: "our God, even the Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁴⁸

If this text, like Romans 9:5, were found in a non-biblical manuscript with someone else being called "God and Lord," there would be no controversy. This passage is clearly a New Testament witness to the deity of Christ.

Our Great God and Savior

Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. (Titus 2:13)

προσδεχόμενοι τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα καὶ
ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ
σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

The issue whether Jesus is here called “our great God and Savior” has been approached in several ways. Since Arians begin with the *a priori* assumption that the New Testament *never* speaks of Jesus as God, they *must* ignore all the grammatical and syntactical evidence of such passages as Titus 2:13. But what else can they do? If they find just *one* passage which speaks of Christ as God, their entire theology falls to the ground. Their belief system is constantly in peril.

On the other hand, the Trinitarian is not faced with such a terrible dilemma. His belief system is not threatened in the least. He can follow the grammar wherever it leads him. Lenski explains:

As far as we are concerned, it makes no difference whether Jesus is here once more called God or not; deity is ascribed to Jesus in so many Scripture passages that the addition or the subtraction of this passage is immaterial. The grammar and the language decide. Here these are decisive and are supported by the context: it is the epiphany of the deity in Jesus Christ that constitutes our blessed hope.¹⁴⁹

It is no surprise that grammarians emphatically state that the Greek text clearly indicates that only *one* person is in view in Titus 2:13: “Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”¹⁵⁰ Middleton states, “It is impossible to understand θεοῦ and σωτηρὸς otherwise than of one person.”¹⁵¹ A.T. Robertson says, “This is the necessary meaning of the one article with *theou* and *soteris*.”¹⁵²

The Granville Sharp rule states that when two or nouns are separated by καὶ with the first noun having the article and the second noun without the article, they both refer to one person. Hendriksen comments:

The article before the first noun is not repeated before the second, and therefore the expression must be rendered: “of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus.” No valid reason has ever been found which would show that the (Granville Sharp rule) does not apply in the present case.¹⁵³

Today, the vast majority of commentators and exegetes agree with the grammarians.¹⁵⁴ Even Brown admits, “This is the most obvious meaning of the Greek.”¹⁵⁵

A few commentators have followed Winer in his denial that Jesus is here called God.¹⁵⁶ But Winer was honest in stating that although the grammar of the text was in favor of “our great God” as a reference to Christ, he was forced by his doctrinal commitment to Arianism not to

accept it.¹⁵⁷ Once again, it is the anti-Trinitarian who allows his theology to dictate the meaning of a text, instead of allowing the grammar and the syntax of the text to determine his theology.

Even the few commentators who followed Winer, cannot get the facts straight. In an attempt to avoid Sharp's rule, Dean Alford claims:

σωτῆρ was one of those words which gradually dropped the article and became a quasi proper name.¹⁵⁸

Timothy Dwight, past president of Yale, answers Alford:

This answer is not to be regarded as satisfactory, for though σωτῆρ apparently came to be used as a proper name in this way, at a latter time, it cannot be affirmed that the apostolic authors so used it.¹⁵⁹

Modern research has confirmed that the phrase "our great God and Savior" was understood by both the Greek and Latin Fathers as a reference to Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁰ This is what Trinitarians would expect to find. Also, the words "God and Savior" were used in the first century by both Jews and pagans as a title of divinity. Murray Harris explains:

The expression θεὸς καὶ σωτῆρ was a stereotyped formula common in first-century religious terminology (see Wendland), was (apparently) used by both Diaspora and Palestinian Jews in reference to Yahweh, and invariably denoted one deity, not two. If the name Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ did not follow the expression, undoubtedly it would be taken to refer to one person.¹⁶¹

Moulton points out that in Titus 2:13:

A curious echo is found in the Ptolemaic formula applied to the deified kings: thus GH 15 (ii/B.C.), τοῦ μεγάλου θεου . . . καὶ σωτῆρος . . . The phrase here is, of course, applied to one person.¹⁶²

We must also point out that nowhere in the New Testament are we told that the Father is going to "appear." As a matter of fact, the word ἐπιφάνειαν (appearing) is always used of Jesus and no one else.¹⁶³ The word μεγάλου (great) is likewise never used of the Father.¹⁶⁴

These reasons given above explain why most modern liberals no longer deny that "our great God and Savior" apply to Jesus in Titus 2:13. It also underscores the importance of not relying on the arguments advanced by nineteenth century liberals. Modern Arians such as the Jehovah's Witnesses have yet to learn this lesson: Jesus is "our great God and Savior."

Thy Throne, O God

But of the Son He says, "*THY THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM.*" (Heb. 1:8)

πρὸς δὲ τὸν υἱόν, Ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεός εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος, καὶ ἡ ῥάβδος τῆς εὐθύτητος ῥάβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου.

This text is the first passage set forth by Reymond Brown under section III, "Texts Where Jesus Is Clearly Called God."¹⁶⁵ Oscar Cullmann states, "Hebrews unequivocally applies the title 'God' to Jesus."¹⁶⁶ Brown and Cullmann are perfect examples of the difference between what Warfield calls the "Old Liberal School" and the "New Liberal School."¹⁶⁷

Eighteenth and nineteenth century liberals did their best to overturn Hebrews 1:8 as a proof text for the deity of Christ by giving it various novel translations. In his classic commentary on Hebrews, John Brown explains:

Those who deny our Lord's divinity have been greatly perplexed by this passage, and have attempted to get rid of the argument by rendering the words, "God is Thy throne for ever and ever." But this is not only contrary to the usage of the language, but it would utterly destroy the force of the Apostle's argument.¹⁶⁸

B.B. Warfield was perturbed by the attempts of liberals to wiggle out of Hebrews 1:8 by retranslating it in such a way to avoid the deity of Christ:

It undoubtedly does not make for edification to observe the expedients which have been resorted to by expositors to escape recognizing that these Psalms do ascribe a superhuman nature and superhuman powers to the Messiah. What they

have done with Ps. xlv. 6—to take it as an example. Rather than take it as it stands, they would prefer it seems to translate vilely, “Thy throne is God,” “Thy throne of God,” “Thy throne is of God,” or to rewrite the text and make it say something else, “Thy throne [its throne is firmly fixed], God [established it],” or “Thy throne [shall be] forever.”¹⁶⁶

These novel translations were “violent avoidance’s” as well as “vile,” according to Warfield. Such strong emotive utterances seem strange in today’s climate of relativism. But we must remember that the nineteenth century Unitarian debates were hot and heavy. The debate generated over five thousand books, pamphlets, and tracts as it raged in Europe as well as in North America.

The old liberals knew that if Hebrews 1:8 was translated in the vocative, i.e., Christ was being addressed by the Father as “God,” then their dogma that Jesus was never called θεός in the New Testament would fall to the ground. In their desperation to avoid this, they went so far as to add words to the Hebrew text of Psalms 45:6, even though they did not have a single manuscript to back them up!

With the appearance of the Werde-Boussett thesis, modern liberalism changed its mind and now readily admits that Jesus was called θεός in the New Testament. Thus, Hebrews 1:8 was just one more such place. Trinitarian scholars had won the day when it came to the grammar and syntax of these passages. But this did not mean that modern liberals are ready to convert to Christianity.

Modern liberals were now willing to admit that the Messiah was called “God” in such places as Psalms 45:6; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8, etc., but the word “God” did not mean true deity but only a “divine hero” like the ones found in pagan mythology.¹⁷⁰ Having failed to get rid of the offending word “God,” they weakened its meaning into something *less* than God.

Today there are two different kinds of anti-Trinitarians. First, there are those like the Jehovah’s Witnesses who still depend on the arguments of nineteenth century liberalism. They retranslate both Psalms 45:6 and Hebrews 1:8 to escape Christ being called “God.” Second, there are the modern liberals who admit that Jesus is called “God,” but then water down the word until it no longer means true deity.

We have already exegeted the Hebrew text of Psalms 45:6 and established that it should be translated in the vocative, “Thy throne, O God.” As we demonstrated in the section on early Jewish literature, the Septuagint, the Targums, and, indeed, all the ancient versions translate it that way. The Midrash (Gen. Rabbah 99:8), the Pseudepigrapha (The

Testaments of The Twelve Patriarchs [Judah 24:1]), and the Talmud (Shab. 63a) all see the Messiah as the One to whom Psalms 45:6 is addressed. Lenski comments:

Here we have a vocative even in the Hebrew as well as in the LXX and in Hebrews, and only the unwillingness of commentators to have the Son addressed so directly as 'Elohim, ὁ θεός (the article with the nominative is used as a vocative), "God," causes the search for a different construction.¹⁷¹

ὁ θεός is found sixty-three times in the vocative in the Psalms. Why then deny it here? Nowhere in Scripture is God ever said to be someone's throne. The language "God is your throne" is rather odd and out of place in Psalms 45 and Hebrews 1. How does such a phrase prove that Jesus has a superior name and nature to the angels?

Please also notice that the word "God" has the definite article in Hebrews 1:8 (ὁ θεός). A comparison of what anti-Trinitarians say on the significance of the presence or absence of the article before θεός reveals an astounding contradiction. They assure us that the lack of the article before θεός in John 1:1c "the Word was God" (θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος) signifies that the word θεός refers to something less than true deity. Thus, Jesus is only "a god" and not really "God." If θεός had the article, they tell us, it would mean true deity. While their understanding of the presence or absence of the article is erroneous, nevertheless, it is what they claim to believe.

Given their view, what should they say about such passages as John 20:28, Titus 2:13, and Hebrews 1:8, which all have the article before θεός? Do they acknowledge that Jesus is true deity because θεός has the article? No. They either ignore the presence of the article or state that its presence does not imply true deity!

They try the same contradictory approach with the Hebrew word אֱלֹהִים. Since it does not have the article in Psalms 45:6, then it does not mean true deity. But the fact is that the lack of the article before אֱלֹהִים is quite normal in Hebrew poetry.¹⁷²

After all the grammatical evidence is examined, nearly all grammarians and commentators reach the same conclusion as Murray Harris:

From the analysis of five proposed translations of Psalm 45:7a, we reached the conclusion that that traditional rendering, "Your Throne, O God, is for ever and ever," is not simply

readily defensible but remains the most satisfactory solution to the exegetical problems posed by the verse.¹⁷³

The context of Hebrews 1:8 is the final proof. The point of the author is that Jesus has a "*more excellent name*" than the angels (v.4). What could that *name* be? It could not be "Jesus" because there was nothing special about that name. The "*more excellent name*" has to be so special that it causes all the angels to worship him (v.5).

What *name* could be so wonderful that the angels would bow down and worship? The only *name* given to Jesus in the immediate context is "God" in verse 8. A.W. Pink explains:

This supplies us with one of the most emphatic and unequivocal proofs of the Deity of Christ to be found in the Scriptures. It is the Father Himself testifying to the Godhead of Him who was despised and rejected of men. And how fittingly is this quotation from Psalm 45 introduced at the point it is in Heb. 1. In v.6 we are told that all the angels of God have received command to "worship" the Mediator. Now we are shown the *propriety* of them so doing. He is "God!" They must render Divine honors to Him because of His very nature. Thus we admire, once more, the perfect *order* of Scripture.¹⁷⁴

The modern attempt to lessen the impact of the vocative in Psalms 45:6 or Hebrews 1:8 by reducing the word "God" to "divine hero" is no longer possible. Since both old and new liberalism developed their respective interpretations of these passages without knowledge of the literature of early Judaism in general and the Dead Sea Scrolls in particular, their claim that we must look to pagan Greek mythology for the source of such language is an example of *argumentum ad ignorantiam*.

It has now been established beyond all doubt that the background, themes, imagery, and vocabulary of the book of Hebrews is Semitic, and not Greek. For example, the references in the Dead Sea Scrolls to Melchizedek may explain why so much attention is paid to him in Hebrews.¹⁷⁵

Our God and Savior Jesus Christ

Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. (II Pet. 1:1)

Συμεὼν Πέτρος δοῦλος καὶ ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ
 Χριστοῦ τοῖς ἰσότημον ἡμῖν λαχοῦσιν πίστιν ἐν
 δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ
 Χριστοῦ

As with Titus 2:13, the Granville Sharp rule once again requires that only one person is being called “our God and Savior” (τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος), and this one person is “Jesus Christ” (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). Virtually all modern translations render the text this way.¹⁷⁶ All the grammarians are united on this even Winer.¹⁷⁷ The vast majority of modern commentators are in agreement as well.¹⁷⁸

Lenski: The use of the one article would say that but *one* is referred to, namely “Jesus Christ, our God and Savior,” in v.2 he is regarded as “our God and Lord”; so also in 2:20; 3:2, 18; II Thess. 1:12; Titus 2:13; Jude 4 (accusative). The effort to find a reference to two persons, God and Christ, is nullified linguistically by the use of but one article in the Greek. There is nothing more to say. The deity of Christ stands forth here as a mountain that no false faith can plunge into the sea . . . When in the face of all this in language and in history anyone asserts that Jesus Christ is here not called God, v.9 states what is wrong with him: he suffers from a dogmatism that, like the old Jewish Sanhedrin, is determined to deny the deity of Christ at every price.¹⁷⁹

Robertson: So the one article (tou) with *theou* and *soteris* requires precisely as with *tou kuriou hemon kai soteris Iesou Christou* (of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ), one person, not two, in 1:11 as in 2:20; 3:2, 18. So in I Pet. 1:3 we have *ho theos kai pater* (the God and Father), one person, not two. The grammar is uniform and inevitable. (Robertson, *Grammar*, p. 786), as Schmiedel (Winer-Schmiedel, *Grammatik*, p. 158) admits, ‘Grammar demands that one person be meant.’ Moulton (Prol., p. 84) cites papyri examples of like usage of *theos* for the Roman emperors. See the same idiom in Titus 2:13.¹⁸⁰

Wuest: We find in II Peter 1:1 the expression, “God and our Savior Jesus Christ,” where the same construction occurs, and the same rule of grammar applies. Solid ground for correct translation and interpretation is found in a careful application of the rules of Greek grammar. . . . The apostles uniformly testify that Jesus

Christ is God, and this is just another example of their statements challenging the Imperial Cult of the Caesar. The translation should read, "through the righteousness of our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ." The Roman emperor was recognized by his subjects as their god and their saviour. Peter tells us that Jesus Christ is the God and Saviour of Christians.¹⁸¹

Warfield: In this respect the two phrases, 'our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' (1:11; 3:18) and 'our God and saviour Jesus Christ' are perfectly similar and must stand or fall together. Not only, however is the deity of our Lord openly asserted in the direct naming of Him here 'our God and saviour.' It is almost equally clearly asserted in the parallel phrase, 'our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' And implied in the conjunction of 'God' and 'Jesus our Lord' in 1:2 as co-objects of saving knowledge (cf. 1:8; 2:20; 3:18), and in the ascription to 'our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' of an eternal kingdom.¹⁸²

Middleton: This passage is plainly and unequivocally to be understood as an assumption that Jesus Christ is our God and Saviour.¹⁸³

Clark: The text is unmistakable. It says quite plainly 'faith in righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.'¹⁸⁴

Bigg: It is hardly open for anyone to translate in I Peter 1:3 ὁ θεός καὶ πατήρ by 'the God and Father,' and yet here to decline to translate ὁ θεός καὶ σωτήρ by 'the God and Savior.'¹⁸⁵

Reymond: We conclude then that 2 Peter 1:1 takes its place alongside John 20:28; Romans 9:5; and Titus 2:13 as a fourth verse in which Jesus is described by the christological title θεός as God.¹⁸⁶

Brown: Second Peter offers a parallel construction which enables us to decide that the author very probably intended both titles, "God" and "Savior," to be applied to Jesus Christ. In II Peter 1:11 we hear of "the eternal kingdom of our Lord-and-Savior Jesus Christ." Here there can be no reasonable doubt that "Lord" and "Savior" constituted a compound title for Jesus, and it seems logical to interpret 1:1 on the analogy of 1:11.¹⁸⁷

Harris: The conclusion seems inescapable that in II Peter 1:1 the title ὁ θεός ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος is applied to Jesus Christ.¹⁸⁸

The reasons which caused all the above scholars to come to the conclusion that Jesus is called ὁ θεός ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος are quite simple and straightforward:

1. Grammar determines theology, not theology grammar.
2. The Granville Sharp rule clearly applies to the syntax of II Peter 1:1.
3. If Sharp's rule does not apply, then *consistency* demands that the rule not be applied elsewhere in Peter's epistles.
4. If the rule is not applied elsewhere, this will result in many absurd interpretations which no one will accept.
5. Thus, consistency demands that if we observe the rule elsewhere, we have to observe it in II Peter 1:1.

The chart below reveals the truth of the above propositions:

Text	Syntax	# of persons	Translation
I Pet. 1:3	ὁ θεός καὶ πατήρ	one	the God and Father
II Pet. 1:11	ὁ κυρίος καὶ σωτῆρος	one	the Lord and Savior
II Pet. 1:1	ὁ θεός καὶ σωτῆρος	one	the God and Savior

If the first person of the Trinity is both "God" and "Father" in I Peter 1:3 and Jesus is both "Lord" and "Savior" in II Peter 1:11, then Jesus is also both "God" and "Savior" in II Peter 1:1. If the Granville Sharp rule does not apply to II Peter 1:1, then the interpretation of I Peter 1:3 and II Peter 1:11 becomes impossible.

Some old school liberals argued that the position of the pronoun "our" (ἡμῶν) in the text indicates that two persons are in view. But this is not true in Greek grammar. In similar constructions in the New Testament, the pronoun ἡμῶν can appear before (II Pet. 1:10) or after (I Thess. 3:7) the first noun. The position of the pronoun does not determine whether one or more persons are in view. Rather, it is the presence or absence of the article before the second noun.

Given such evidence, why would anyone choose to believe otherwise? Brown points out that circular reasoning is the hidden principle at work. Such passages as II Peter 1:1 are:

rejected by scholars, despite the grammatical arguments in their favor, on the grounds that the use of "God" for Jesus is rare in the New Testament and therefore always to be considered improbable. However, is not the rarity of the usage to some extent dependent on the rejections of these examples?¹⁸⁰

Second Peter 1:1 is exactly the kind of passage which the Trinitarian expects to find in the New Testament. He is not surprised by such language. It is not odd or mysterious to him. But the anti-Trinitarian must admit that he would have never written John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; I Thessalonians 1:12; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; or II Peter 1:1.

If Peter *wanted* to indicate that two persons were in view in II Peter 1:1, all he had to do was to add the article before the second noun. But he did not do this. Instead, he wrote a sentence in the Greek language of his day which would clearly indicate to his readers that Jesus Christ was both God and Savior.

He Is the True God

We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. (I John 5:20 NIV)

ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς καὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος.

The editors of the New International Version were so certain that John was calling Jesus Christ ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς καὶ ζωὴ Αἰώνιος "the true God and eternal life" that they used "He is" instead of "This is" so the English reader could not miss the point. This translation could be made in the later half of the twentieth century because most scholars, liberal as well as conservative, were now in agreement that the name "Jesus Christ" was grammatically the antecedent for the pronoun οὗτός.¹⁸¹

This passage, more than any other, illustrates the importance of following the normal rules of Greek grammar. The word οὗτός is a pronoun. No one can disagree with this. As a pronoun, οὗτός would naturally refer back to the person just mentioned. No one can disagree with this either. Robertson states the rule:

Οὗτός does, as a rule, refer to what is near or last mentioned and ἐκεῖνος to what is remote.¹⁸¹

But what about the few exceptions where οὗτός acts like ἐκεῖνος and refers not to the person immediately in view, but to someone before him? Anyone who is at all familiar with ancient literature knows that such “exceptions” do appear from time to time. For example, a writer can mix genders or numbers. But such “exceptions” do not disprove the general rule that genders and numbers should agree.

That there may be a few rare exceptions to a general rule does not mean that one should approach a text of Scripture with the *a priori* assumption that it *will* be an exception to the normal rules of grammar. Instead, we should approach a text with the *a priori* assumption that the normal rules of grammar and syntax will apply unless there are clear *grammatical* reasons to depart from those rules.

Please notice that we said “*grammatical*”—not “theological”—reasons. Just because the grammar of a text leads to an idea which contradicts what you believe, this does not give you the right to throw grammar to the wind. Theology cannot overthrow or ignore the grammar of the sacred text. It can only bow before it.

Many people today ignore the grammar of the original text and instead interpret the Bible from their “feelings.” Besides being a form of exegetical suicide in which one slits his own throat with the rusty blade of relativism, Christ and the apostles used grammar and not their “feelings” as the rule of interpretation.

In Matthew 22:32, Jesus used the distinction between the past tense “was” and the present tense “is” as proof that there is a conscious afterlife. The apostle Paul in Galatians 3:16 based his argument that Christ was preached to Abraham on the distinction between the singular and plural forms of the word “seed.” They used the rules of grammar as the proof of their theology.

The Greek text of I John 5:20 is simple and straightforward. John used οὗτός fifty-five times in his writings. Thus, we are not talking about a rare usage of a rare word. There are plenty of places in John’s writings where οὗτός was used in the same kind of construction as found in I John 5:20 and no one has any problem with οὗτός referring back to the antecedent.

Does anyone question whether οὗτος refers to “Judas” in John 6:71? No. Does anyone object to οὗτος in John 1:41 referring back to the “Andrew” mentioned in v.40? No. Or that οὗτος in John 1:30 refers back to “Jesus” in v.29? No. Where are all the angry denials that οὗτος in John 6:46 refers to Jesus as ὁ ὢν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ? Has anyone ever denied that in II John 9 οὗτος refers back to ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ διδασχῇ? No.

Why then all the hysteria over whether οὗτος refers to Jesus in I John 5:20? Obviously, it is not the grammar or syntax of the Greek that causes

people to question whether οὗτος refers to Jesus Christ *per se*. It is that it refers to Him *as God*. That is the real issue.

If the text read, Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ. οὗτός ἐστιν ζωὴ Αἰώνιος ("Jesus Christ. This is Eternal Life"), there would be no controversy whatsoever. Οὗτός would be seen as referring to Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ. But once you add ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς to the phrase, then the controversy begins.

The evidence for Jesus being called "the true God" and "Eternal Life" is quite strong:

1. The general rule on pronouns is that it modifies the immediate antecedent. This means Jesus Christ.

Brown: Grammar favors a reference to the nearest antecedent, and this would be "Jesus Christ." In this case Jesus Christ is called true God.¹⁹²

Candlish: The Lord Jesus Christ is the person here meant. Such seems to be the fair inference from the use of the pronoun "this;" which naturally and usually indicates the nearest person spoken of in the context; and therefore, in this instance, not "him that is true," but "his Son Jesus Christ." That inference indeed is so clear, in a merely grammatical and exegetical point of view, that there would not probably have been any doubt about it, were it not for its implying an assertion of our Lord's supreme divinity; an assertion which no sophistry or special pleading can evade or explain away.¹⁹³

Morgan and Cox: There can be no doubt they refer to Jesus Christ. We are shut up to this conclusion by the construction of the passage. Christ is the near and natural antecedent to the assertion of the apostle.¹⁹⁴

Marshall: The NIV rightly adopts the view that οὗτός refers back to Jesus.¹⁹⁵

For the last time John hammers home the point. He—Jesus—is the true God and eternal life. Here, as in the Gospel (Jn. 1:1; 20:28; cf. 1:18 NIV mg.), John declares that Jesus is the true God.¹⁹⁶

2. The Granville Sharp rule once again applies. The phrase ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς καὶ ζωὴ Αἰώνιος is composed of two nouns separated by καὶ with the first noun having the article and the second noun without the article. This means that only *one* person is in view. He is called "Eternal Life" as well as "God." Thus, the idea that οὗτός refers to an abstract concept, and not to a person, is eviscerated by the grammar.

3. While John elsewhere refers to Jesus as "Eternal Life" (I John 1:2), the Father is *never* called "Eternal Life." More importantly, in the immediate context, since Jesus is "eternal life," then to have Him in your heart is to have eternal life (I John 5:11-12). In John's writings, ζωὴ Αἰώνιος "Eternal life" refers to Jesus.

4. John applies the adjective ἀληθινός "true" to Jesus many times:

Text	Title
John 1:9	the true Light
John 6:32	the true Bread
John 15:1	the true Vine
Rev. 3:7	the true One
Rev. 3:14	the true Witness
Rev. 6:10	true Sovereign & Lord

5. That the Father is called "true God" in John 17:3 and the Son is called "true God" in I John 5:20 is no more a contradiction than the fact that they are both called the "true One" (I John 5:20 cf. Rev. 3:7).

6. The interpretation that "the true God" refers to the Father leads to a meaningless tautology. Lenski explains:

In the first place, if οὗτός has as its antecedent "the real God" (the Father), then the statement is a tautology: John would say: "This *real* God is the *real* God." He would say it after having twice said: we know the real God and are in the real God.¹⁹⁷

7. Lastly, the next verse warns us to keep away from idols. There is an obvious contrast between the "true God" and the "false gods" of the heathen. The pagans may worship their "divine heroes," such as Adonis, but Christians worship Jesus Christ who is not a "idol" or "false god," but "the true God."

We have completed our investigation to see whether the authors of the New Testament believed that Jesus Christ was divine. All we needed was one solid passage in which He is called θεός in the sense of true deity. And we have found many such passages.

In all of these places, θεός is an ontological term denoting what Christ is by nature. The modern liberal attempt to reduce the deity of Christ to a functional concept is neither biblical nor logical. Harris comments:

The presupposition of functional Christology is ontological Christology. Christ *performs* divine functions because he is divine. His ability to act "divinely" rests on his being divine. Behind Christ *pro nobis* is Christ *in se*. Temporally, being precedes doing. Logically, doing presupposes being.¹⁹⁸

We now proceed to other divine names and titles which the New Testament ascribes to Christ.

Absolute Deity (θεότητος)

Because in Him there is continuously and permanently at home all the fullness of absolute deity in bodily fashion. (Col. 2:9 Wuest)

ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς
θεότητος σωματικῶς

In the context, Paul is refuting various doctrinal errors that had crept into the church at Colosse. He is refuting what is now known as Gnosticism. But it was a kind of Gnosticism that had absorbed aspects of Judaism and was now trying to absorb aspects of Christianity.¹⁹⁹ This was viewed with horror by the apostle Paul and in his letter to the Colossians he counters their heresies. He castigates them as:

Greek term

τῆς φιλοσοφίας
κενῆς ἀπάτης
τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων
τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου
οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν

Translation

philosophy
vain deceit
the tradition of men
the ABC's of this world
not according to Christ

Paul first states that the intellectual origins of these heresies are found in man's attempt to understand God apart from Scripture. Since it began with man instead of God, *humanistic philosophy* has utterly failed to know God (I Cor. 1:20-21). This is not a condemnation of philosophy *per se* because Paul elsewhere tells us that Christians have their own philosophy (I Cor. 2:6).

Secondly, the personal motives which prompted these heresies are to be found in their *vanity and deceitfulness*. Because of their pride, they would rather lie than tell the truth.

Thirdly, instead of following Scripture, they followed the *traditions of men* just like them. By these traditions, they made null and void the Word of God (Mark 7:13).

Fourthly, what these heretics teach is not really "deep" or "advanced" as they claim. No, their teachings are nothing more than *the ABC's of carnal or worldly wisdom*. Their ideas are actually quite stupid and devoid of intellectual merit.

Fifthly, they are *contradicting the Messiah*. In Him *alone* we find the full expression of absolute Deity in bodily form. Men, angels, or other heavenly beings do not partake of absolute Deity in any manner.

Lastly, this means that to be in union with Him is be complete. Thus, we don't *need* men, angels, or other heavenly beings to complete us. Jesus Christ is all we need.

The context reaches its climax with the deity of Christ. Because He is absolute Deity manifested in the flesh, we do not need anything or anyone else. We are complete in Him.

The interpretation above depends on the definitions of the key words in the text and certain grammatical and syntactical observations:

1. The words ἐν αὐτῷ "in Him" are syntactically not in their normal place *after* the verb. Instead, Paul puts them at the *beginning* of the sentence to emphasize that *in Him alone* dwells absolute deity.²⁰⁰ When you read it out loud, emphasize the words "in Him" to get the force of the verse.

2. The verb κατοικεῖ "dwells" is in the present tense and indicates that Christ was, is, and always shall be the embodiment of Deity.²⁰¹ This in opposition to those heretics who taught that Jesus became the divine Messiah at His baptism and then ceased to be so at His death. Lightfoot comments:

One class of early Gnostics separated the spiritual being Christ from the man Jesus; they supposed that the Christ

entered Jesus at the time of His baptism and left Him at the moment of His crucifixion.²⁰²

3. It is, thus, a mistake to restrict this verse to the incarnation.²⁰³ If Paul had only the incarnation in mind, he would have written the verb in the aorist tense. But the present tense clearly indicates that absolute deity resides bodily in Christ *permanently*.

The “embodiment” may have begun at the incarnation, but it is an ongoing reality in heaven where the glorified body of Jesus resides until His return to judge the living and the dead. The grammarians Rienecker and Rogers comment:

to settle down, to be at home (Col. 1:19). The pres. act. ind. tense indicates the continual state and points to the pres. reality.²⁰⁴

The same point is made by Hendriksen:

Paul uses the present tense. He does not say that the Word *became* flesh but that the fullness of the godhead dwells or is dwelling in Christ. And surely that indwelling did not just begin with the incarnation. It is an eternal indwelling.²⁰⁵

4. The Old Testament significance of “dwelling” is not to be overlooked. Just as Yahweh “dwelt” in the temple in the Old Testament, even so He now dwells bodily in Jesus Christ.²⁰⁶ This concept is also found in Matthew 23:21 where God is described as τῷ κατοικοῦντι αὐτόν “the One who dwells in” the temple.

5. The meaning of the words πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα “all the fullness” has been unnecessarily muddled by the attempt of some liberals to turn πλήρωμα into a functional (active) term to escape its ontological (passive) significance.

J.B. Lightfoot objected to this by pointing out that a functional approach to the word πλήρωμα was a “disregard of lexical rules” and a “disregard for grammar.” Nouns ending in -ma are passive and not active. Hence, they are not functional, but ontological in significance.²⁰⁷ In other words, it is not the action of being filled but the result of having been filled, that Paul has in mind.

The word τὸ πλήρωμα was used by the Gnostic teachers at Colosse. This is why Paul deliberately used it to show how far off they were from the truth. Lightfoot explains:

The term *pleroma*, we may presume, was common to St. Paul and the Colossian heretics whom he con-verts. To both alike it conveyed the same idea, the totality of the divine powers or attributes or agencies or manifestations. But after this the divergence begins. They maintained that a single divine power, a fraction of the *pleroma*, resided in our Lord: the Apostle urges on the contrary, that the whole *pleroma* has its abode in Him.²⁰⁸

6. The word θεότητος is only found here in the New Testament. It is derived from θεός and means “absolute Deity.” All the lexicons, grammars, and commentaries define θεότητος as “absolute Deity.”²⁰⁹ Thayer defines it as “deity, i.e., the state of being God.”²¹⁰ Wuest states:

It is not merely divine attributes that are in mind now, but the possession of the essence of deity in an absolute sense.²¹¹

As Moule points out, Paul is referring to “the whole glorious total of what God is, the supreme Nature in its infinite entirety.”²¹² Trench comments:

St. Paul is declaring that in the Son there dwells all the fullness of absolute Godhead; they were no mere rays of divine glory which gilded Him, lighting up his person for a season and with a splendor not his own; but He was, and is, absolute and perfect God; and the Apostle uses θεότητος to express this essential and personal Godhead of the Son.²¹³

7. Paul states that “absolute Deity” resides in Jesus σωματικῶς “bodily.” The Gnostics denied that God could be incarnate in a human body. The very idea of God and matter being mixed together was horrifying to them. This is why Paul deliberately chose the word σωματικῶς. It meant that absolute Deity was “permanently embodied” in Jesus Christ. Robertson explains:

Paul here disposes of the Docetic theory that Jesus had no human body as well as the Cerinthian separation between the man Jesus and the aeon Christ. He asserts plainly the deity and the humanity of Jesus Christ in corporeal form.²¹⁴

Paul stated that absolute Deity was embodied in Jesus in order to correct the errors of the false teachers at Colosse. The implications of this are brought out beautifully by John Eadie:

The fullness of the Godhead was embodied in Him, or dwelt in Him—in no invisible shape, and by no unappreciable contact. It assumed a bodily form. It abode in Him as a man. It made its residence the humanity of Jesus. Divinity was incarnated in Christ. It shrunk not from taking upon it our nature, and realizing the prophetic title “Immanuel, God with us.” The same idea is contained in John 1:14 “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.” The Logos, yet unfleshed, was God, and was with God, Divine and yet distinct from the Father; but the fullness of Godhead was only spiritually within Him. Now, it has made its abode in his humanity without consuming it or deifying it, or changing any of its essential properties.²¹⁵

In Jesus, we are clearly confronted with The Theophany of all theophanies. But, whereas in the Old Testament, the “form of Yahweh” (כְּתֹרֶת יְהוָה) was only a temporary physical manifestation, Jesus is the permanent physical manifestation of God in human form.

What must be in order for what is to be what it is? If Jesus Christ is the embodiment of absolute Deity, how could this idea be stated in the Greek language? What Greek words would convey this concept? θεότητος means “absolute Deity” and σωματικῶς means “embodiment.” The union of these two words indicates the union of the divine and human in Jesus.

Is it a mere coincidence that Paul used the exact words in the Greek language which would clearly convey this idea to the rational mind? While Trinitarians expect to find the authors of the New Testament applying such exalted titles to Jesus, what Arian would ever use such language?

Old Testament Titles and Names for God

If the authors of the New Testament believed that Jesus was God as well as man, then we would expect to find them applying Old Testament titles and names for God to Him. On the other hand, if the anti-Trinitarians are right and the authors of the New Testament did not

believe in Christ's deity, then we would not expect to find them doing so. These two propositions are quite simple and straightforward. Which view is substantiated by the evidence?

The New Testament writers did not hesitate to take Old Testament divine titles and names and apply them to Jesus. The fact that they did this with such *ease* and *freedom* reveals that they began with the assumption that Jesus Christ is God as well as man. The following chart illustrates some of these titles and names.

Title/Name	Yahweh in the OT	Jesus in the NT
Creator	Gen. 1:1	John 1:3
The Rock	Deut. 32:4	I Cor. 10:4
The Shepherd	Ps. 23:1	Heb. 13:20
The King of Glory	Ps. 24:7	Matt. 25:31-34
The First and Last	Isa. 44:6	Rev. 22:13
I Am	Exod. 3:13-14	John 8:58
Savior	Isa. 45:21	John 4:42
Holy One	Isa. 45:11	John 6:69

That such titles and names rich with Old Testament meaning would be applied to Jesus reveals that He must be God. It would have been sheer blasphemy to apply such titles and names to Jesus, if He were not true deity. That this was understood is demonstrated by John 8:58.

The Great "I Am"

In Exodus 3:13 Moses asked God which divine name he should use when speaking to the people of Israel. God responds in verse 14:

And God said to Moses, "**I AM WHO I AM**"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

The Septuagint reads:

καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Μωυσῆν ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν καὶ
 Εἶπεν οὕτως ἑρεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ ὁ ὢν ἀπέσταλκέν
 με πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

From this verse, the Jews came to view the words ἐγὼ εἰμι "I Am" as a divine name for God. For a mere man to use this name for himself was blasphemy. It is in this context that John 8:58-59 must be read:

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, **I Am**." Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple.

Verse 58 reads in the Greek:

εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Ἰησοῦς, Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, πρὶν ἄβραάμ γενέσθαι, **ἐγὼ εἰμί**.

The reaction of the Jews to the holy name ἐγὼ εἰμι was swift and deadly. They tried to kill Jesus for blasphemy because He used the divine name ἐγὼ εἰμι in reference to Himself.

The tense of the verb εἰμι is not in question. It is the present indicative tense. A.T. Robertson comments:

I am (ἐγὼ εἰμι). Undoubtedly here Jesus claims eternal existence with the absolute phrase used of God. The contrast between γενέσθαι (entrance into existence of Abraham) and εἰμι (timeless being) is complete. See the same contrast between εἶναι in 1:1 and ἐγένετο in 1:14. See the contrast also in Ps. 90:2 between God (εἶ, art) and the mountains (γεννηθῆναι). See the same use of εἰμι in John 6:20; 9:9; 8:24,28; 18:6.²¹⁶

If all Jesus wanted to say was that He existed before Abraham, all He had to do was to use the imperfect tense "I was." But this would not have caused a riot and an assassination attempt. It is His use of the present tense and the way He said it that made them riot.

That this passage is a powerful proof that Christ claimed to be God is seen from the extreme lengths some Arians go to avoid it. The Jehovah's Witnesses in their *New World Translation* render ἐγὼ εἰμι as "I have been" and in a footnote claimed that it is in "the perfect indefinite tense."²¹⁷ But no such tense exists in the Greek language. They deliberately made it up to justify their mistranslation of ἐγὼ εἰμι.

They compound their guilt by pretending in the same footnote that the words ἐγὼ εἰμι do not appear in the Greek text of Exodus 3:14. They correctly point out that the phrase ὁ ὢν in Exodus 3:14 is not the same as ἐγὼ εἰμι. But then they leave the reader with the impression that *only* ὁ

ὦν appears in Exodus 3:14 and that ἐγὼ εἰμι does not appear in Exodus 3:14. Such deceptive practices reflect a total disregard for the sacred text.

The same is true for their claim that ἐγὼ εἰμι should be viewed as a historical present.²¹⁸ But the historical present refers to *narratives* not to dialogues and debates. Brooks and Winberry, in their work *Syntax of New Testament Greek*, explain:

For the sake of vividness or dramatic effect a writer sometimes imagines that he and /or his readers are present and are witnessing a past event. He narrates the past event as though it were actually taking place.²¹⁹

As Robertson points out, "In John 8:58 εἰμι is really absolute."²²⁰ It is not in a narrative. Walter Martin comments:

The Watch Tower's contention on this point is that the phrase in question is a "historical present" used in reference to Abraham, hence permissible. This is a classic example of Watch Tower double talk. Jesus was not narrating but arguing, and the "historical present" is used in narrative not argument as any standard grammar reveals.²²¹

After denouncing the Arian interpretations as "dishonest quibbles," Alford goes on to state:

In this verse the Godhead of Christ is involved; and this the Jews clearly understood, by their conduct to Him.²²²

The same argument can be made for all the Old Testament titles and names of God transferred to Jesus in the New Testament. Since two persons cannot be "the First and Last," the Savior, the Shepherd, etc., then the One given such titles in the OT is the same One given such titles in the NT. This principle is axiomatic.

The title "the First and the Last" is an excellent example of this principle. In Isaiah 44:6 we are told:

Thus says [Yahweh], the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, [Yahweh] of [armies]: *'I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.'*

There is no question that "the first and the last" is a divine title of Yahweh. This same claim was made earlier in Isaiah 41:4. When we turn

to the New Testament, we find that "the first and the last" is none other than Jesus.

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, "Do not be afraid; *I am the first and the last.*" (Rev. 1:17)

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: *The first and the last*, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: (Rev. 2:8)

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. (Rev. 22:13)

As Lenski states, the phrase:

"I am the first and the last," undoubtedly designates Jesus as God.²²³

Lord (ܠܪܐ) (ܠܪܐ)

Since the Palestinian Jews spoke Aramaic before, during, and after the birth of Christ, we are not surprised to find the Aramaic word for Lord (ܠܪܐ) was used as a title for the God of Israel. The precedent had already been set by the book of Daniel which used the Aramaic word ܠܪܐ (Lord) for God in Daniel 2:47; 5:23 and the Aramaic Targums which also used ܠܪܐ as a title for God. The Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls used ܠܪܐ as a title for God as well (I Q Genesis Apocryphon 20:12-15; 22:16, 21; 11Qtg Job 24:6-7; 4QEn 1, iv.5).

The above facts completely overthrow the claim of Bousset, Bultmann, etc., that ܠܪܐ was never used of God, but only of men. Their ignorance of the Jewish literature on this point is as astounding as their dogmatism.

If the Palestinian Jews who became Christians believed that Jesus was God, then we would expect to find them using the divine title ܠܪܐ as a title of Christ. And this is exactly what we find in I Corinthians 16:22:

If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed.
Maranatha.

εἴ τις οὐ φιλεῖ τὸν Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, ἦτω
ἀνάθεμα. Μαράν ἅθα.

While the English has only one word "maranatha," the Greek actually has two: the Aramaic title "mare" (from מָרָא) and the verb "to come," both transliterated from Aramaic into Greek. It means "Our Lord, come!" This translation has been verified by some of the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls found in Cave 4.

As R.T. France points out, it is clearly a pre-Pauline act of worship to Jesus in which the saints prayed to Him for His swift return. The early Palestinian Jewish Christians used it as a greeting to each other. It was later used by the Church as part of the communion service.²²⁴

Paul's use of the Aramaic title מָרָא for Christ is highly significant because it reveals that the early Palestinian Jewish Christians prayed to Christ as God. This fact completely overthrows the Werde-Boussett thesis that the Palestinian Church did not speak of Jesus as Lord.

"Against their hypothesis," points out William Childs Robinson, the well-known church historian:

there is evidence of the prior application of Lord to Jesus in the primitive Aramaic community and in the teachings of Jesus. *Maranatha*, "may our Lord come!" (I Cor. 16:22; Didache 10:9; cf. Rev. 22:20), testifies to worship of Jesus as Lord in the Aramaic speaking community which looked for his coming rather than that of the Father (Acts 3:20; I Thess. 4:16; 1:10). Phil. 2:6-11 is now recognized as a part of the primitive *kerygma* taken over by the Apostle from an Aramaic hymn.²²⁵

Prof. Herman Waetjen, University of Southern California, explains:

This has meant the destruction to the hypothesis posed by Wm. Bousset in his books: *Kyrios Christos* (1913) and *Jesus der Herr* (1916). In this "Kyrios" controversy Bousset argued that primitive Christianity in Jerusalem regarded Jesus chiefly as the Son of Man yet to come and usher in God's kingdom. The title "Lord" was only applied later on Greek soil under the influence of Hellenistic Christianity. Gentile Christians, familiar with the mystery cults, would interpret the lordship of Jesus in ways determined by their previous experience.²²⁶

Lord (Κύριος)

We saved our discussion of the significance of the use of Κύριος until now because as many other modern scholars have pointed out, Κύριος must be understood in terms of its *Semitic* background.²²⁷ As Prof. C.F.D. Moule points out, the old Werde-Boussett thesis claimed:

it was not until pagan Saviour-cults had introduced a new dimension into Christian thinking that Jesus began to be *acclaimed* as Lord.²²⁸

Bousset's *Kyrios Christos* asserted that Κύριος must be understood in its *pagan* significance of divine hero worship. Thus, Jesus was transformed into a pagan god by gentile Christians. Of course, as we have already demonstrated, this claim was based on his ignorance of the literature of early Judaism. As Moule points out:

Against this view it may be urged that it is largely guess-work, and there are facts which seem to point in a different direction.²²⁹

Bousset's and then Bultmann's claim that it would be "unthinkable" for a Jew to use the Aramaic מְרָא (Lord) or the Greek Κύριος (Lord) for God has been one of the main pillars of modern liberalism. Bultmann simply assumed it as a fact and never bothered to examine the evidence against it. The evidence against it is more than sufficient to overthrow it:

1. Bousset's work was based on a logical fallacy. It is really only an argument from *silence*. As far as he knew, *he* had never seen any early Jewish literature which used Κύριος for God.
2. It now is recognized that Bousset was not familiar with what early Jewish literature was available in their day. Thus, his work was based on another logical fallacy: an argument from ignorance.
3. If Bousset would have picked up either Philo or Josephus, he would have found them using Κύριος for God. For example, in *Antiquities* book XIII, sec. 1, Josephus translates Isa. 19:19 into Greek using Κύριος as a translation of יְהוָה (YHWH).

"There will be *an altar to the LORD* in the midst of the land of Egypt." (Isa. 19:19)

Heb. יהוה יתקף מזבח ליהוה בחורף ארץ מצרים

LXX ἐκεῖναι ἔσται θυσιαστήριον τῷ κυρίῳ ἐν χώρᾳ

Josephus: θυσιαστήριον ἐν Αἰγυπτῷ κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ

4. The title Κύριος is also found in T. Leviticus 18:2 and I Enoch 10:9.

5. A comparison of the Aramaic and Greek versions of the book of Enoch reveals that **ܡܪܐ** (Lord) in 9:6; 89:31, 33, 36 is translated as **Κύριος**. This is true in I Corinthians 16:21 as well.

6. While the oldest copies we have of the Septuagint go back only to the 4th century, we do have New Testament manuscripts from the first century. In these first century *Jewish* documents, the authors translated the Hebrew words **אלהים** (God), **יהוה** (Yahweh) and **אדני** (Lord) as **Κύριος**.

7. Some ultra-conservative Jews were so superstitious about the sacred letters **יהוה** (YHWH) that they refused to use any linguistic equivalent in any language. A few fragments have survived which indicate that in some instances the sacred name **יהוה** was simply inserted into the translated text. Evidently, they rarely used the Aramaic word **ܡܪܐ** (Lord) or the Greek words **θεός** (God) or **Κύριος** (Lord) as linguistic equivalents.

Their hesitation to use **ܡܪܐ**, **θεός**, or **Κύριος** or any other foreign name for **יהוה** (YHWH) had nothing to do with whether these names were valid names for Deity *per se*. Indeed, these names were used by Jews in other circumstances such as worship where **יהוה** was never spoken.

Bultmann and his disciples erroneously assumed that **Κύριος** was not used in these fragments because it was viewed by the Jews as a profane pagan name for God. But they got it backwards. It was the sacredness of the name **יהוה** and not the supposed profanity of **Κύριος** that caused its omission. That this is true is seen from the fact they omitted the use of **θεός** as well. Who would claim that the Jews viewed **θεός** as profane and pagan?

8. Lastly, the early Jews nowhere complained about the use of **Κύριος** for God or Jesus. If it were blasphemous for **Κύριος** to be used in reference to God, some rabbi somewhere would have used it as an apologetic against the Christians. The burden of proof is on the liberals to produce early Jewish writings which protested the use of **Κύριος**.

Werde, Bousset, Bultmann, etc., were dead wrong. The Jews were in fact using both **ܡܪܐ** and **Κύριος** as designations for God. As Professor Moule points out, we do not:

... need to wait for the Church to move out into the Greek world, for the bridge to be built between a "Master" to be

invoked and a "Lord" to be worshipped and acclaimed: the necessary linguistic bridge was already there . . . [כִּי־יְיָ is] an Aramaic word capable of designating divinity is shown to be current at the time.²³⁰

After surveying the evidence, Fitzmeyer concludes,

The origin of this title for Jesus is not to be traced to Hellenistic soil, but rather to the use of *mareh*, *adon* or κύριος in pre-Christian Palestinian Judaism. The title implies that the exalted Jesus is on a par with Yahweh.²³¹

Κύριος in the New Testament

The word κύριος appears 719 times in the New Testament. In the Gospels ὁ κύριος was often used in the sense of a "slave master" or the "owner" of a house or vineyard.

Matt. 10:25; 18:25, 27, 32, 34; 20:8; 21:49; 24:45, 46, 48; 24:50;
25:19, 21, 23, 26; Mark 13:35; Luke 12:23, 42-46; 14:23; 16:3, 8;
John 15:15, etc.

But by the time the Epistles were written, ὁ κύριος had become an unique and almost exclusive title for the exalted Jesus.

The Crucial Issue

The crucial issue in the New Testament's use of κύριος for Jesus is not whether the people He came into contact while on earth used the word as a polite title (Master) or as a form of worship. That depended entirely on their level of understanding at that time.

The crucial issue centers in the following question: If the authors of the New Testament believed that the God referred to in the Old Testament was at times the pre-existent Christ or a prophecy of Christ, how could they convey this idea to their readers? What must be in order for what it to be what it is?

This question was first asked concerning the Father and we found that the authors of the New Testament took Old Testament passages which speak of God and applied them to the Father. Since this is the method they used to establish the deity of the Father, then we would expect them to take specific Old Testament passages where God was clearly in view and then attribute them to Jesus in the New Testament. Any attempt to deny this method will overturn the deity of the Father as well as the Son.

On the other hand, if the authors of the New Testament were Arians, they would never dream of doing this. It would be blasphemous for them to take a passage referring to Yahweh and attribute it to Jesus.

We are once again faced with a test to determine if the evidence confirms Trinitarianism or Arianism. What does the evidence show? Did the authors of the New Testament take passages from the Old Testament in which God was in view and apply them to Jesus?

The evidence is overwhelming that the authors of the New Testament had no difficulty whatsoever in taking Old Testament passages which clearly have God in view and applying them to Christ. They did this so often and with such ease that it is clear that this practice was already an established Christological principle of the early Church. Several examples will demonstrate this principle.

In Matthew 21:15-16, Jesus took a passage from the Old Testament and applied it to Himself. The context is the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The multitudes shouted their praise to Jesus as He rode into the city on a colt in fulfillment of prophecy (vs. 1-9) While the crowds were receptive to Jesus, the priests and scribes were not:

But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became indignant, and said to Him, "Do You hear what these children are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'OUT OF THE MOUTH OF INFANTS AND NURSING BABES THOU HAST PREPARED PRAISE FOR THYSELF'?" (Matt. 21:15-16)

The children were praising Jesus as the long awaited "Son of David," i.e., the Messiah. They used the word "Hosanna" (Ὡσαννά) which was an Aramaic word transliterated into Greek. By the first century it had become a Jewish liturgical term used in worship.²³² It was derived from the Hebrew word הוֹשַׁנָּה and is a prayer to God that He may save us (i.e., Ps. 3:8; 6:5; 7:2; 31:17; 54:3; 59:3; 69:2; 109:26; 119:94, 146).

Since "Hosanna" was a liturgical term used for worship, the priests and scribes were naturally shocked that Jesus allowed the children to apply "Hosanna" directly to Him. The response of Jesus is significant. He justified what the children were doing by quoting the first part of Psalms 8:2 from the Septuagint.

O LORD, our Lord, How wonderful is thy name in all the earth!
For Thy magnificence is exalted above the heavens. *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise.*
(Ps. 8:1-2 LXX)

Who has perfected praise for Himself? Whose praise comes forth from the mouths of these children? To whom is David speaking? A comparison of the Septuagint and the Hebrew text will tell us:

LXX κύριε ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν (O LORD, our Lord)

Heb. יְהוָה אֲדֹנָי (Yahweh Adonai)

The Greek word κύριος (Lord) is the equivalent of the Hebrew יְהוָה (Yahweh). Thus, the texts reveal that the Person to whom the words, "From the mouth of infants and nursing babes" are directed in Psalms 8 is *God*. Of this there can be no doubt.

What then is the only rational conclusion one can deduce from Jesus' use of Psalms 8:2? Since it was Jesus Himself who took an Old Testament passage addressed to YHWH and applied it to Himself, then the God to whom David prayed was Jesus.

The New Testament's use of the Old Testament to document the deity of Christ is quite extensive. The following chart illustrates the kind of evidence that is found throughout the New Testament.

We will list only the passages which clearly take an Old Testament deity text and apply it to Jesus. In places where more than one name for God is found (i.e., Yahweh Elohim), we will list only Yahweh. In some cases, the context must supply the specific name of God in view. (i.e., Isa. 51:6 cf. 50:1).

Text	OT		Text	NT Person In View
	Heb.	LXX		
Isa. 40:3	יְהוָה	κύριος	Matt. 3:3	Jesus
Ps. 8:1-2	יְהוָה	κύριος	Matt. 21:16	Jesus
Ps. 8:1	יְהוָה	κύριος	Matt. 21:15	Jesus
Isa. 40:3	יְהוָה	κύριος	Mark 1:3	Jesus
Ps. 66:16	אֱלֹהִים	θεός	Mark 5:19-20	Jesus
Mal. 3:1	יְהוָה	κύριος	Luke 1:76	Jesus
Isa. 40:3	יְהוָה	κύριος	Luke 3:4	Jesus
Isa. 40:3	יְהוָה	κύριος	John 1:23	Jesus
Isa. 10:33	יְהוָה	κύριος	Rom. 9:28	Jesus
Joel 2:32	יְהוָה	κύριος	Rom. 10:13	Jesus
Isa. 45:23	יְהוָה	κύριος	Rom. 14:11	Jesus
Jer. 9:24	יְהוָה	κύριος	I Cor. 1:31	Jesus
Isa. 45:23	יְהוָה	κύριος	Phil. 2:16	Jesus

Num. 16:5	יהוה	κύριος	II Tim. 2:19	Jesus
Ps. 130:8	יהוה	κύριος	Tit. 2:13	Jesus
Ps. 97:7	יהוה	κύριος	Heb. 1:6	Jesus
Ps. 45:6	אלהים	θεός	Heb. 1:8	Jesus
Ps. 102:25f	יהוה	κύριος	Heb. 1:10	Jesus
Isa. 51:6	יהוה	κύριος	Heb. 1:11	Jesus
Ps. 34:8	יהוה	κύριος	I Pet. 2:3	Jesus
Isa. 8:13	יהוה	κύριος	I Pet. 3:15	Jesus
Zech. 12:10	יהוה	κύριος	Rev. 1:7	Jesus
Jer. 17:10	יהוה	κύριος	Rev. 2:23	Jesus
Ps. 62:12	אדני	κύριος	Rev. 22:12	Jesus
Isa. 40:10	יהוה	κύριος	Rev. 22:12	Jesus

The chart above demonstrates beyond all doubt that there are passages in the Old Testament which referred to the one true God of Israel which were actually speaking about Jesus either in His pre-incarnate state or as a prophecy of His person or work. Even the Unitarian scholar Joseph Thayer had to admit that this is evidently true.²³³ The Greek word κύριος is thus the link between the Yahweh of the Old Testament and the Jesus of the New Testament.

The Attributes of God

Jesus Christ is described as an eternal (Micah 5:2; John 1:1; Col. 1:17), omnipotent (Rev. 19:16), omniscient (Matt. 11:27; John 2:24-25; 16:30), omnipresent (Matt. 18:20), Holy (John 6:69), immutable (Heb. 1:10-12; 13:8), and true deity (I John 5:20). No mere creature could be described as such without committing blasphemy.

First John 1:3 once again becomes highly significant. The *fact* that we can fellowship with the Son not only demonstrates His Personhood, but also demonstrates His divinity. The Apostle John clearly assumed that *all* believers in *all* places at *all* times in *all* generations under *all* circumstances can fellowship with the Son who is now in heaven. This is possible only if the Son is eternal, immortal, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, etc. In other words, the Son *must* be God in order for fellowship with Him to be possible.

Hebrews 1:10-12 is also highly significant because the author takes several Old Testament passages (Ps. 102:25f; Isa. 51:6) which contrasted the attributes of God to the attributes of the creation, and applies these passages to Jesus to contrast His divine attributes to that of Creation. What applied to Yahweh in the Old Testament *equally* applies to the Jesus of the New Testament.

Equal with God

This of course means that Jesus in His divine nature is equal to God the Father. We are explicitly told this in John 5:18:

For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, *making Himself equal with God*.

In his explanation of why the Jews were trying to kill Jesus, John tells us that it was not His breaking the Sabbath *per se* that made them want to kill Him, but rather it was His claim that God was His Father in a unique way not shared by others. The Greek text is quite emphatic on this point²³⁴:

ἀλλὰ καὶ πατέρα ἴδιον ἔλεγε τὸν Θεόν

Why did Jesus' unique relationship with the Father get them so mad? John tells us that Jesus was actually claiming to be equal with God. (ἴσον ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν τῷ Θεῷ.) It was thus for *blasphemy* that they wanted to kill Him.²³⁵

Equality with God the Father is further illustrated in verse 23 where Jesus says that He is to have equal honor with the Father:

in order that all may honor the Son, *even as* they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. (John 5:23)

The equality is seen in the word καθὼς (even as) which means that we are to honor (τιμᾶω) the Son equally as we honor the Father. As Hubner points out, "John 5:23 expresses the center of Johannine theology."²³⁶ A.T. Robertson comments:

Jesus claims here the same right to worship from men that the Father has. Dishonoring Jesus is dishonoring the Father who sent him (8:49; 12:26; 15:23; 1 Jo 2:23). See also Lu 10:16. There is small comfort here for those who praise Jesus as teacher and yet deny his claims to worship.²³⁷

The Works of God

Jesus is the One who created the universe (John 1:3; Col. 1:16). He is sovereign over all things (Rom. 9:5; Rev. 19:16). He is the Savior of the world (John 4:42; I John 4:14) and our Redeemer (Gal. 3:13; Tit. 2:14).

Such titles as "Savior" are clear indications of deity because Yahweh stated that He was the ONLY Savior:

"I, even I, am [Yahweh]; And *there is no Savior besides Me.*"
(Isa. 43:11)

Yet I have been [Yahweh] your God since the land of Egypt; And you were not to know any god except Me, for *there is no Savior besides Me.* (Hosea 13:4)

In the Old Testament, we are repeatedly told that God is the Savior (II Sam. 22:3; Pss. 17:7; 106:21; Isa. 43:3; 45:15, 21; 59:26; 60:16; Jer. 14:8, etc.). In the New Testament, we are repeatedly told that the Savior is Jesus Christ (Luke 2:11; John 4:42; Eph. 5:23; Phil. 3:20; Tit. 1:4; Tit. 1:4; 3:6; II Pet. 1:11; 2:20; 3:2, 18, etc.).

From these two facts, the Apostles drew the logical conclusion that Jesus was, thus, "our God and Savior" (Tit. 2:13; II Pet. 1:1). With the word "Savior" as the middle term, their conclusion that Jesus was both God and Savior is valid.

The Words of God

There are many ways in which the authors of the New Testament clearly indicated that the God referred to in the Old Testament was at times Jesus Christ. They did this by applying to Jesus key Old Testament expressions which referred to God:

Expression	O. T.	N. T.
"the word of the Lord"	Isa. 2:3	Luke 22:61; Acts 11:16
"the fear of the Lord"	Ps. 34:11	II Cor. 5:11
"the day of the Lord"	Amos 5:18	I Cor. 5:5; I Thess. 5:2

The expression "the word of the Lord" was used 241 times in the Old Testament to refer to the divine revelations given by Yahweh to His people. Thus, "the word of the Lord" was revealed to the prophets and they passed it on to the people.

For the writers of the New Testament to refer to the words of Jesus as "the word of the Lord" (Luke 22:61; Acts 11:16) is understandable only if they believed that He was Yahweh.

The Worship of God

It is essential that we approach the subject of the worship of Jesus from the context of Judaism, and not pagan Greek mythology. Once again, the Werde-Boussett thesis which formed the basis of Bultmannianism begins in the wrong place. As Richard Bauckman points out:

In the exclusive monotheism of the Jewish religious tradition, as distinct from some other kinds of monotheism, it was worship which was the real test of monotheistic faith in religious practice . . . a firm line had to be drawn between God and creatures, and in religious practice it was worship which signaled the distinction between God and every creature, however exalted. God must be worshipped, no creature may be worshipped.²³⁸

The intertestamental Jews understood that since only God is to be worshipped, they cannot worship anyone or anything else. They were willing to die rather than worship created things. We have already examined their prohibitions against the worship of angels or other heavenly beings in our study of early Jewish literature.

Thus, the issue is not if the words "fall down" (πίπτω) or "worship" (προσκυνέω), are ever used to describe one man falling down in respect before another man. Since the physical act of falling down is the same, regardless whether it is before God or man, we would expect the same word to be used. Thus, it is not the words used, but the attitudes displayed that determine if worship is going on.

How do we worship God the Father? By our prayers and praise in which we offer our faith, hope, love, and obedience to Him (Matt. 5:16; 6:9-13; John 4:23-24; Eph. 3:14; Phil. 4:20; Rev. 4:9-11, etc.). How do we praise Him in worship? By speaking highly of Him before others; speaking to Him directly in prayer; and by singing to Him in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

Prayers to Jesus

If the authors of the New Testament worshipped the glorified Jesus, how could they indicate this to their readers? What words would they

use? Obviously, they would utilize the words used in divine worship and attribute to them the same attitudes found in the worship of the Father.

If they believed that Jesus is God, then we would expect to find them worshipping Him as God. They should speak highly of Him before others; speak to Him directly in prayer; and sing to Him in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. We would expect to find them placing their ultimate faith, hope, love, and obedience in Him.

But if they did not believe that Jesus was God, then they would not worship Him. They would not and, indeed, could not sing or pray to Him as if He were God. Their ultimate faith, hope, and love must be placed elsewhere.

Was Jesus worshipped in the New Testament? Yes. How? By the prayers and praises of the saints and by their placing their ultimate faith, hope, love, and obedience in Him. Once again, I John 1:3 becomes significant:

what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed *our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.*

The *substance* of our fellowship with the Son of God reveals His deity as well as His personhood. *How* do we fellowship with the Son? By talking to Him in our prayers; by extolling Him in our worship; by listening to His Word; by obeying His law; by giving Him our ultimate faith, hope, love, trust, confidence, and praise; by honoring Him as our Creator and Sovereign Lord, etc. If the Son is not deity, then our fellowshiping with Him would be the grossest kind of idolatry.

Prayer is an act of worship in which you better be speaking to God or you are wasting your time. We pray to God because we assume that He is omniscient and omnipresent. Thus, He can read our thoughts as well as hear our words. He is everywhere present and can listen to us and billions of other people at the same time. He is omnipotent and, thus, has infinite power to answer our prayers.

It does not make any sense to pray to a mere creature instead of to the Creator. Since a finite creature is not omnipresent, omniscient or omnipotent, why bother to pray to him? He is not capable of hearing billions of people and angels at the same time. And, since he is not omnipotent, he could not help us anyway.

When we turn to the Bible, do we find the Old Testament saints praying to Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob? No. Are any of the Psalms addressed to Moses? No. Did the Jews pray to the prophets or priests? No. Did the

temple choirs chant in worship to men, women, or angels? No. They prayed to God alone.

Do we find any prayers addressed to the Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, or angels in the New Testament? No. Then should we find any prayers addressed to Jesus? Not unless He is God. And if they did, in fact, pray to the ascended Jesus, then He has to be God.

Prayers in the Old Testament

The Psalms are composed of several different kinds of literature. There are Psalms where the author addresses himself (Ps. 103:1). Sometimes, he would address other believers (Ps. 95:6). But when he prayed to God, God was spoken to directly (Ps. 43:1).

If the authors of the New Testament worshipped Jesus, then we would expect to find them applying to Jesus some of the prayers recorded in the book of Psalms. And this is exactly what they did.

In Psalms 8:1-2, Yahweh is addressed in prayer:

O [Yahweh], our Lord, how majestic is Thy name in all the earth, who hast displayed Thy splendor above the heavens! From the mouth of infants and nursing babes Thou hast established strength, because of Thine adversaries, to make the enemy and the revengeful cease.

Since Yahweh is addressed in the vocative, there is no way to avoid that this is a prayer. Yet, when we turn to Matthew 21:16, Jesus Himself takes this prayer and applies it directly to Himself!

In Psalms 102: 24-27, we have another prayer addressed to God:

I say, "O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days, Thy years are throughout all generations. Of old Thou didst found the earth; And the heavens are the work of Thy hands. Even they will perish, but Thou dost endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing Thou wilt change them, and they will be changed. But Thou art the same, and Thy years will not come to an end."

When we turn to Hebrews 1:10-12, we find that this prayer is applied to Jesus by the Father Himself! This is why Christians have always applied many of the prayers recorded in the Psalms to the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e., Ps. 116:1-2).

Prayers to Jesus in the New Testament

While on earth in the state of humility, Jesus taught His disciples to pray to the Father (Matt. 6:9f). But even during this period, He commanded them to come to Him for their spiritual nourishment (John 6:53; 15:1-7). Once He ascended to heaven, the only way we can obtain spiritual nourishment from Him is through prayer.

One good example of this reality is the text:

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:28)

Since He is no longer physically on earth, but sits at the right hand of the Father, the only way to go to Jesus for rest of soul is to go to Him in prayer.

Prayers to the ascended heavenly Jesus are recorded in several places in the New Testament. The earliest prayers were in Aramaic and such words as “Hosanna”²³⁹ (Matt. 21:15) and “Maranatha” (I Cor. 16:22) were prayers addressed to Jesus by Palestinian Jewish Christians.

In Acts 1:24-25, the disciples asked the Lord Jesus to help them choose someone to take Judas’ place. That the “Lord” addressed is Jesus is clear from verse 2. F.F. Bruce explains:

. . . the verb used in “thou hast chosen” (end of v.24) is the same as that used in “he had chosen” (end of v.2), it reasonable to conclude that Jesus is the subject here as in the former place.²⁴⁰

Also, Jesus is called κύριος (Lord) in verse 21 and the pronoun αὐτοῦ in verse 22 refers to Jesus. Thus it is only natural that κύριε in verse 24 refers to Him.²⁴¹

The next prayer to Jesus is found in Acts 7:59-60. After Stephen had a vision of the heavenly Jesus, the mob dragged him outside the city and proceeded to stone him. As Stephen died, according to Luke, he prayed twice to Jesus:

“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord [Jesus] do not hold this sin against them!”

Notice that the prayers to Jesus occurred outside of the city while the vision of the ascended Christ occurred in the city. That the word “Lord” is

in the vocative no one can deny. In the second prayer, we have an ellipsis because Luke assumed that the reader would have enough sense to repeat the word "Jesus." All attempts to explain away this direct prayer to Jesus has failed. Gloag comments:

Here undoubtedly Stephen prays to Jesus; all attempts to explain this away are unavailing, and rejected by the critics of the rationalistic school.²⁴²

This prayer reveals that Jesus had the power to forgive or not to forgive sin. As F.F. Bruce points out, this proves that Jesus was worshipped as God from the earliest days of the Church.²⁴³

Ananias' prayer to Jesus is recorded in Acts 9:10-17:

10 Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and *the Lord* said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Behold, here am I, *Lord*."

11 And *the Lord* said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying,

12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight."

13 But Ananias answered, "*Lord*, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem;

14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind *all who call upon Thy name*."

15 But *the Lord* said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;

16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

17 And Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, *the Lord Jesus*, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

We have quoted the entire text so that it will be clear that "the Lord" who spoke to Ananias was, according to verse 17, "the Lord Jesus." It was Jesus who appeared to Paul (verse 4) and now commands Ananias to go to Paul.

In II Corinthians 12, the apostle Paul stated that he prayed to “the Lord” three times to have a “thorn in the flesh” removed. Was “the Lord” to whom he prayed a reference to Jesus or to the Father? If we let the context reign supreme, we have another prayer to Jesus:

Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for *my power* is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that *the power of Christ* may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, *for Christ’s sake*; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (II Cor. 12:8-10)

Whose “power” is perfected in weakness? The “power” of the “Lord” to whom Paul prayed. And according to Paul, whose “power” thus dwells within him? The “power of Christ.” Thus, the “Lord” to whom he prayed was the same “Lord Jesus” who met him on the road to Damascus and sent him forth as a missionary.

Calling on the Name

Most significant is the use of the Old Testament phrase “all who call upon Thy name” found at the end of verse 14. The phrase means to call upon the name of God *in worship* (Gen. 4:26; 13:4; Pss. 105:1; 116:13, 17; Jer. 10:25; Joel 2:32). It never meant anything else. Thus, its use in such passages as Acts 7:59 cannot be dismissed so easily.

One clear passage that forges the link between the Old Testament concept of “calling upon the name of God” and “calling upon the name of Jesus” is Romans 10:13 which is a quotation of Joel 2:32:

Joel 2:32 Heb. אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא בְשֵׁם יְהוָה

LXX πᾶς ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου

Rom. 10:13 πᾶς ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου

That the word κύριος refers to Jesus cannot be doubted in the light of verse 9 where our salvation depends on whether we acknowledge Jesus as κύριος. All the pronouns in verses 10, 11, and 12 refer back to Jesus as well as every occurrence of the word κύριος. Thus, the Yahweh (יהוה) of

Joel 2:32 is Jesus upon whose name we call for salvation. Indeed, as Peter stated:

“There is salvation in no one else; for there is *no other name* under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

In this light, Stephen’s prayer was an act worship when he “called” upon the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 7:58). Paul worshipped Jesus as he “called” upon Him to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16). In I Corinthians 1:2, Christians are described as:

... all who in every place *call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

A “Christian,” according to this passage, is one who worships Jesus as God. Anything less than this is not true Christianity. It is, thus, highly significant that the last prayer recorded in the Bible is a prayer to Jesus. “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev. 22:20). If Jesus Christ be not God, then such prayers are a waste of time at the least and blasphemy at the worse.

Singing Hymns to Jesus

No matter how honored the Patriarch or prophet, hymns were never sung to them in worship. The singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs has always been part of the worship experience of the people of God. They come from hearts filled with joy and gratitude for all the Lord has done for them.

If the early Church viewed Jesus as God, we would expect to find them singing to Christ in worship and praise. And when we open the New Testament, this is exactly what we find. Around a dozen hymn fragments have been so far identified in the New Testament:

Luke 1:46-55	Eph. 5:14
Luke 1:68-79	Col. 1:15-20
Luke 2:14	I Tim. 3:16
Luke 2:29-32	Rev. 5:8-14
Phil. 2:6-11	Rev. 7:9-12

In the Book of Revelation, direct worship of Christ is pictured as taking place in heaven. It is *absolute* worship *equally* shared by the Father and

the Son.²⁴⁴ Read carefully the passage below and observe how Christ is worshipped by the singing of hymns to Him:

Rev. 5:8 And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders *fell down before the Lamb*, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

9 And they sang a new song, saying, "*Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.*"

10 "And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

11 And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands,

12 saying with a loud voice, "*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.*"

13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, *and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.*"

14 And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders *fell down and worshipped.*

In the passage above Christ is being worshipped by the myriads of heaven. Any attempt to ignore or deny this reality is futile. It would be blasphemous to ascribe "*power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing*" and "*blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever*" to the heavenly Jesus, if He were not true deity. These are the very same words by which we worship the Father:

And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and *worshipped God*, saying, "Amen, *blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*"
(Rev 7:11-12)

Christ is not only the direct object of worship in the book of Revelation, but He is also pictured as receiving *equal* worship with the Father:

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing *before the throne and before the Lamb*, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, *and to the Lamb*." (Rev 7:9-10)

The multitude is pictured as worshipping the Father and the Son by ascribing salvation to both of them equally. This cannot be swept aside by saying that Jesus was worshipped as an angel because the worship of angels is explicitly forbidden in Col. 2:18:

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and *the worship of the angels*.

For Him and by Him

We must also point out that in Colossians 1:16, not only was the universe created *by* Jesus, but also "*for*" Him. The preposition "*for*" in this hymn is sufficient by itself to demonstrate the deity of Christ. That Christ created the universe for *Himself* is unthinkable to the Arian. But this is what the hymn says.

Doxologies

Since Jesus was worshipped as God, we are not surprised to find doxologies addressed to Him in the New Testament. A doxology is a spontaneous outburst of worship in which one ascribes glory, honor, and sovereignty to God. We find such doxologies directed toward the Father in the following passages:

For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, *who is blessed forever. Amen.* (Rom. 1:25)

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. *To Him be the glory forever. Amen.* (Rom. 11:36)

to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, *be the glory forever. Amen.* (Rom. 16:27)

according to the will of our God and Father, *to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.* (Gal. 1:4-5)

to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. (Eph. 3:21)

Now to our God and Father *be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (Phil. 4:20)*

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, *be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (I Tim 1:17)*

To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen. (I Tim 6:16)

To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen. (I Pet 5:11)

to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 1:25)*

And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying, "*Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*" (Rev. 7:11-12)

All doxologies manifest the same literary pattern and grammatical structure. They all close with an "Amen" because they are prayers of praise and, thus, acts of worship. The vocabulary used in doxologies ascribe eternal sovereignty, glory, blessing, wisdom, might, power, thanksgiving, majesty, authority, honor, and dominion to God.

Did the authors of Scripture ever burst forth in doxologies to angels or men? No. If mere creatures could be the recipients of such worship, then we should find within Scriptures doxologies to Gabriel or Abraham. Indeed, "idolatry" by definition is ascribing to a creature that which belongs to God alone.

For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Rom. 1:25)

The very idea of ascribing eternal sovereignty, glory, blessing, wisdom, might, power, thanksgiving, majesty, authority, honor, and dominion to a creature is blasphemous.

What must be for what is to be what it is? If the authors of Scripture believed that Jesus was God as well as man, then we would expect to find them ascribing to Him that which belongs to God alone. We would expect to find them breaking out in spontaneous doxologies of praise to the Lamb who sits on the throne. Thus, the fact that doxologies to Christ are found in the New Testament is sufficient in and of themselves to prove that Christ is God.

Let us begin with Romans 9:5 which is a doxology to Christ:

whose are the fathers, and from whom is *the Christ* according to the flesh, *who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.*

Since we have already exegeted this text, we refer the reader to our previous discussion of it. Christ is praised for His sovereignty over all things and blessed as God.

Another doxology is found in II Timothy 4:18:

The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; *to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

The context makes it clear that Jesus is "the Lord" Paul's has in view (II Tim. 1:1 cf. 4:1; 8, 14, etc.). A.T. Robertson points out that this is "Paul's final doxology, his Swan Song, to Christ."²⁴⁵ Patrick Fairbairn comments:

The context obliges us to connect this ascription of divine glory with Christ; for it was He, doubtless, of whom the apostle spake as standing by him, strengthening and delivering him.²⁴⁶

Every commentary we could find on II Timothy agreed that this is a doxology of worship to Christ the Lord.²⁴⁷

As the author of Hebrews comes to the end of his epistle, he breaks forth in a doxology:

. . . working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through *Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*
(Heb. 13:21)

The vast majority of commentators are certain that the context and the grammar of the text demonstrate that the words "to whom" must refer to the immediate antecedent "Jesus Christ."²⁴⁸ A few commentators refer

the doxology back to God the Father.²⁴⁹ And two try to make it refer to both.²⁵⁰

After reading them all, we agree with the majority that the natural reading of the text, which would follow the normal rules of grammar and syntax, address the doxology to Christ. Doctrinal considerations should not overrule grammar.

First Peter 4:11 has another doxology:

Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through *Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Does this doxology refer to Jesus or to the Father? A.T. Robertson states that the grammar of the Greek text clearly favors Christ as the antecedent:

"To whom (dative) is," that is to Jesus Christ the immediate antecedent.²⁵¹

But other commentators are just as sure that it is a doxology to the Father and not to Christ.²⁵² The Greek text is as follows:

Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ᾧ ἐστὶν ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ Κράτος
εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν.

The grammatical point that tips the scales in favor of Christ as the referent is the presence of the word ἐστὶν which is not normal for this kind of doxology. A comparison of the doxologies beginning with the word ᾧ will demonstrate this fact.

Gal. 1:5	ᾧ ἡ δόξα
II Tim. 4:18	ᾧ ἡ δόξα
Heb. 13:21	ᾧ ἡ δόξα
I Pet. 4:11	ᾧ ἐστὶν ἡ δόξα

J. Hart, in the *Expositor's Greek Testament*, explains the significance of the presence of the word ἐστὶν:

The inclusion of ἐστὶν changes the doxology to a statement of fact and thus supports the interpretation of ᾧ as referring to

the immediate antecedent *Jesus Christ*. Already He possesses the glory and the victory; realizing this His followers endure joyfully their present suffering and defeat.²⁵³

Arian objections to this being a doxology to Christ are invariably theological in nature and ignore the rules of grammar.

In II Peter 3:18 we read:

but grow in the grace and knowledge of *our* Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the *glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

The words αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα καὶ νῦν καὶ εἰς ἡμέραν αἰῶνος. ἀμήν are without a doubt a doxology to Jesus. No other interpretation is grammatically possible. As a matter of fact, we could not find a single commentator who denied that it was addressed to Christ. As the Great Reformer John Calvin stated:

This is an outstanding doxology for showing the divinity of Christ, for this cannot apply to any but God alone. The adverb of present time *now* means that we must deprive Christ of His glory as long as we soldier on in the world, He adds immediately after *unto the day of eternity* so that we may now imagine in our minds His eternal kingdom, which will reveal to us His full glory.²⁵⁴

Revelation 1:5-6 is another clear doxology to Christ.

and from *Jesus Christ*, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To *Him* who loves us, and released us from our sins by *His* blood, and *He* has made us to be a kingdom, priests to *His* God and Father; *to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. ἀμήν.

A.T. Robertson comments:

To him (αὐτῷ). Another doxology to Christ. “The adoration of Christ which vibrates in this doxology is one of the most impressive features of the book” (Moffatt).²⁵⁵

The grammar of the text is clear that Jesus is the One who is the focus of this glorious doxology. All the pronouns refer back to Christ.

The enthroned Christ is worshipped by a glorious hymn in Revelation 5:8-14, which ends with a doxology addressed to the Father *and to Christ*.

And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, *and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.*” And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” And the elders *fell down and worshipped.* (Rev. 5:13-14)

R. T. France points out that:

. . . worship and praise are offered to him equally with the Father. . . . The great doxologies of Revelation are not a new experiment involving the worship of one previously regarded in a less exalted light, but the proper expression of an attitude to Jesus which had been there from the beginning, increasing no doubt in intensity and in sophistication, but deriving from the impression made by Jesus himself during his earthly ministry.²⁵⁶

The worship of Christ by the hosts of heaven and by the Church on earth reveals His absolute deity. All we needed to find to demonstrate the deity of Christ was just one clear doxology given to Him. But we found six such doxologies. To Him be the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen!

Do You Love Him?

The last consideration is found in I Corinthians 16:22:

If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed.
Maranatha.

We recognize that there is a problem with the Greek text. Did the original text read “the Lord” (τὸν κύριον) or “the Lord Jesus Christ” (τὸν Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν)? Textual critics are divided on this issue.

But we hasten to point out that the identity of “the Lord” *per se* is not in question. Paul repeats the reference in the next verse as τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (the Lord Jesus Christ). It is easy to see why some scribes would take the words Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ from verse 22 and insert them after τὸν Κύριον (the Lord) in verse 21 because it is clear that Jesus is the one we must love.

Given the principle that the more difficult reading is more than likely the original text, while we can easily see why a scribe might “correct” verse 21 by adding the two words Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ from verse 22, we cannot see any reason why a scribe would remove both words. Most modern scholars take this position.

The point we want to make concerning this verse is that Paul demands that we place our ultimate *love* in the Lord Jesus Christ. If we do not LOVE Him, we will end up under the wrath of God (ἀνάθεμα). A.T. Robertson comments:

Ἀνάθεμα. The word seems a bit harsh to us, but the refusal to love Christ (οὐ φιλεῖ) on the part of a nominal Christian deserves ἀνάθεμα.

In the last analysis, if Jesus Christ be God, then no sacrifice for Him is too great, too difficult or too costly. Our response to the love of Christ is to love Him back and to live our lives in service for Him (II Cor. 5:14-15).

A fervent and passionate love of the Lord Jesus Christ is thus the very soul of Trinitarianism and the missing note in Arianism. This is why the Socinians, the Unitarians, the Liberals, and the cultists have never manifested a deep *love* for Jesus Christ. Their “Jesus” is not worthy of their love.

Conclusion

What must be in order for what is to be what it is? We have found that the authors of the New Testament affirmed the Jewish concept of the deity of Messiah. They did this in so many ways and on so many occasions that no doubts remain. Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, is the Lord God manifested in the flesh. God of very God and man of very man. He is the Savior whom we love, worship, and obey.

The Trinitarian has discovered the secret that to know Jesus is to love Him. To love Him is to serve Him. To serve Him is to worship Him. Blessing and honor and glory and dominion be unto the Him forever and ever. Amen.

Notes

1. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 1:64.
2. *Ibid.*, 63.
3. Phillip Hughes, *Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 378-379, n. 39.
4. I Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 72 n. 10.
5. James Morgan and Samuel Cox, *The Epistles of John* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1982), 133.
6. Marshall, 159.
7. *The Five Gospels*, ed. Robert W. Funk and Roy W. Hoover and the Jesus Seminar, (NY: Macmillan, 1993), 2-34.
8. *Ibid.*, 32.
9. *Ibid.*, 5-6.
10. *Ibid.*, 1, 5, 6, 8, 35.
11. *Ibid.*, 2.
12. *Ibid.*, 2-3.
13. *Ibid.*, 7.
14. *Ibid.*, 24-25.
15. *The Five Gospels*, 5.
16. *Ibid.*
17. John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), xxvii. See also *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994).
18. *Ibid.*, xxviii.
19. *Ibid.*

20. Ibid., xxvii.
21. For example: *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, 17 July 1994.
22. *The Historical Jesus*, 421.
23. If you are interested in my debates with Crossan and other members of the Jesus Seminar, write to the Research and Education Foundation, P.O. Box 250, Newport, PA 17074.
24. C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (NY: Bantam, 1982), 67-69.
25. For further study on this point see: Robert B. Strimple, *The Modern Search for the Real Jesus* (Phillisburg, NY: P & R, 1995) and N.T. Wright, *Who Is Jesus?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992).
26. For a transcript of my debate with an atheist who claimed that Jesus never existed, see my book, *The New Atheism and the Erosion of Freedom* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1995).
27. Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 45.
28. Ibid., 45-46.
29. Lias, 294.
30. Robert S. Candlish, *The First Epistle of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 180-181.
31. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3:252-253.
32. John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 3:227.
33. Ibid., 227-228.
34. No one has ever equaled the great Princeton theologian Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield in his treatise, "On The Emotional Life of Our Lord" found in *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia: P & R, 1950), 93-145. He demonstrates that the emotions which Jesus displayed in the Gospels are true human emotions and that they constitute one of the pillars upon which rests the doctrine of His true humanity.

35. For a good discussion of ellipsis see F. Bass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961), 253f.
36. Lias, 296.
37. *Linguistic Key To The New Testament* 792. See also Ernest De Witt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*, (London: T. & T. Clark, 1966), 60.
38. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of I and II Epistles of Peter, the Three Epistles of John, and the Epistle of Jude* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966), 487-488.
39. A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman, 1933), 6:229-230.
40. Marshall, 71.
41. Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 2:395
42. Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 19.
43. William G.T. Shedd, *A Critical and Doctrinal Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), 8-9.
44. Hermann Olshausen, *Studies in the Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1983), 64.
45. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 5.
46. William Hendriksen, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 42.
47. Warfield, 235.
48. Ibid., 237.
49. Ibid., 213.
50. E.W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1980), 2:127.

51. J.B. Lightfoot, *Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica* (Peabody: Hendriksen, 1989), 3:387.
52. Frederick Louis Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 3:235.
53. Ibid., 236.
54. Meyer, 302.
55. Hodge, 252. See also Murray, 279 and Lenski, 499.
56. Shedd, 229.
57. *Langenscheidt's Hebrew English Dictionary*, trans. Karl Feyerabend (London: Methuen, 1957), 243.
58. See Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 761-762; Girdlestone, 317; etc.
59. *Lange's Commentary*, 7:36.
60. Laetsch, *Minor Prophets*, 272. See also Pusey's remarks in *Barnes Notes, vol II on The Minor Prophets*, 70-71.
61. *The Septuagint Version* (London: Bagster, n.d.), 110.
62. *Linguistic Key to the New Testament*, 217.
63. Murray J. Harris, *Jesus as God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 54.
64. Thomas Sheehan, *The First Coming*, 210.
65. Ibid., 212-217.
66. Ibid., 209.
67. Hendrikus Boers, "Jesus and the Christian Faith: New Testament Christology Since Bousset's *Kurios Christos*" (*Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. LXXXIX, 1970), 456.
68. Murray Harris, 21-50.
69. Ibid., 37.
70. Ibid., 38.

71. William Hendriksen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (London: Banner, 1964), 70. See also Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 2:25-33, for a good summary of the various theories on the meaning of Logos.

72. Lightfoot, *Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*, 3:238; Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel*, 29-33; Henstenberg, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 1:6; A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman, 1932), 5:3-4.

73. Godet, 1:244-245. See also Marcus Dods in *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 1:683.

74. Yeager, 4:2.

75. Lenski, 33-33.

76. William Hendriksen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (London: Banner, 1964), 71.

77. Harris, 310.

78. Ibid., 64. See also A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 5:4; Vincent, *Word Studies*, 2:34.

79. Murray Harris, 74.

80. *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1:691.

81. Lenski, 96.

82. Hendriksen, *John*, 90.

83. A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 5:17.

84. For a good in-depth discussion of John 1:18, see Murray Harris, 73-103.

85. Lenski, 98.

86. A.T. Robertson, 5:17; *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1:692; Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 1:69; Godet, 1:282.

87. Lenski, *John*, 764.

88. Hendriksen, *John*, 128.

89. *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1:794.
90. A.T. Robertson, *Word Studies*, 5:316.
91. A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 462.
92. *Lange's Commentary*, John, 9:622, n.2. See also Lenski, 1389; Murray Harris, 106-129.
93. *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, 1:866.
94. Rudolph Bultmann, "The Confession 'Jesus Is God' in the New Testament" (*Scottish Journal of Theology*, 10:276).
95. Raymond Brown, *Jesus, God and Man* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1967), 28.
96. Murray Harris, 137.
97. A.T. Robertson, *Word Studies*, 3:353; Murray Harris, 136.
98. Brown, 11-12.
99. Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Acts of the Apostles* (Winon Lake: Alpha, 1980), 4:391.
100. For a listing of the patristic references see Alford, 2:230.
101. Yeager, *ibid.*, 10:461.
102. For a detailed list of those scholars who support a doxology to Christ as God, see Murray Harris, 154, n. 22. He found thirty six commentaries which supported a doxology to Christ and only thirteen who supported a doxology to the Father (172, n. 98).
103. H.P. Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord Jesus and Saviour Jesus Christ* (Minneapolis: Klock, 1978 reprint of 1897 edition), 317.
104. Hendriksen, *Romans*, 315.
105. Robertson, *Word Studies*, 4:381.
106. Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 300.

107. Alford, 2:406. See also *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, 2:658. "Grammatically it is quite simple. For own naturally applies to what precedes: the person who is over all is naturally the person just mentioned, unless there is decisive reason to the contrary."
108. Brown, 21.
109. Harris, 158. "one never finds asyndetic doxologies."
110. Murray, *Romans*, 1:246.
111. Ibid., 1:248.
112. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg: 1961), 587.
113. Lenski, *Romans*, 588; Godet, *Romans*, 343.
114. Harris, 144, n. 1.
115. Robert Haldane, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London: Banner, 1963), 445.
116. Rienecker and Rogers, 550.
117. William Hendriksen, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Banner, 1963), 103, n. 82. See also Vincent, *Word Studies*, 3:430: "It has a backward look into an antecedent condition, which has been protracted into the present. Here appropriate to the preincarnate being of Christ, to which the sentence refers."
118. Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 3:82-83.
119. Yeager, 432-433.
120. Judg. 8:18; Job 4:16; Isa. 44:13; Dan. 4:33; 5:6, 9, 10; 7:28.
121. *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, 3:435-436.
122. Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus: Divine Messiah* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1990), 257-258.
123. J.B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), 110.

124. Trench, 262.

125. A.T. Robertson, 4:444.

126. Vincent, 3:431.

127. Hendriksen, 104-105.

128. For a good discussion of this view see: R.W. Hoover, "The Harpagmos Enigma: A Philological Solution," (HTR lvi, 1971), 95-119.

129. N.T. Wright, "arpagmos and The Meaning of Philippians 2:5-11, *The Best in Theology*, ed. J.I. Packer, (Carol Stream: Christianity Today, n.d.), 2:101.

130. Rienecker and Rogers, 550.

131. Ibid. See also Hendriksen, 106-109; Lenski, 779-782; Lightfoot, 112; H.C.G. Moule, *Philippians Studies* (Ft. Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1975), 93; etc.

132. Rienecker and Rogers, 550-551.

133. Vincent, 3:332.

134. Burton, 170, #437-438; A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 4:244.

135. Rienecker and Rogers, 550.

136. *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie* (Leicester: IVP, 1982), 7.

137. Acts 15:23; Acts 26:30; I Cor. 3:8, etc.

138. William Hendriksen, *I and II Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 164, n. 117.

139. H. Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1883), 3rd ed., 281; Robertson, *Grammar*, 785-786; Moulton, *Einleitung*, 134; Schmiedel, 158.

140. Robertson, *Grammar*, 786.

141. Meyer, 587-588.

142. Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia: P & R, 1952), 68, 70.
143. Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 4:46.
144. Robertson, *Grammar*, 786.
145. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles* (Minneapolis: Augsburg: 1964), 398.
146. Lange, 2:120.
147. Bultmann, 1:129.
148. Kenneth Wuest, *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 485. This refutes the claim that no English translation has "God" modifying Jesus. (Harris, 265).
149. Lenski, 922.
150. Robertson, *Grammar*, 786; James Hope Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1930), 1:84; Charles Francis Digby Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1960), Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, 145; James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winberry, *Syntax Testament Greek* (Lanham, MD: University Press, 1979), 76.
151. Thomas J. Middleton, *The Doctrine of the Greek Article* (London: Rivingtons, 1841), 394.
152. Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 604.
153. Hendriksen, 374.
154. Harris, 185; Warfield, 70-71; Reymond, 275-276; Wuest, 3:33; Liddon, 319; *Ellicott's Commentary*, 7:258-259; Yeager, 16:35; Lange, 16; Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 604; Hendriksen, 374; Lenski, 922; Patrick Fairbairn, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956), 282-285; Thomas Taylor, *Exposition of Titus* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1980), 350; Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:129. See Murray Harris (185) for more commentators.
155. Brown, 17.
156. Alford, 3:419-420; *Expositors Greek Testament*, 195-196; Vincent, 4:345.

157. This was pointed out by Van Oosterzee in Lange, 11:16-17; Warfield, *Studies*, 70; Robertson, *Grammar*, 786; Hendriksen, *A Commenary On The Epistles to Timothy and Titus* (London: Banner, 1964), 374.

158. Alford, 420.

159. Meyer, 308.

160. Ellicott, 269; Lange, 17.

161. Harris, 178-179. See also Robertson, *Grammar*, 786; Hendriksen, 375; Reymond, 276.

162. Moulton, *Grammer of New Testament Greek*, 1;84.

163. Ellicott, 258; Reymond, 276; Lange, 17; Hendriksen, 375.

164. Harris, 182-183.

165. Brown, 23.

166. Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1959), 310.

167. Warfield, *Studies*, 109f.

168. John Brown, *The Epistle To The Hebrews* (London: Banner, 1964), 56-57.

169. Warfield, 88-89. John Calvin stated in his own day, "It is obvious that these are nothing but evasions. Anyone who reads this verse with a clear mind and without looking for an argument will not be turned aside from calling the Messiah God." *Calvin's Commentary*, 12:14.

170. *Christ The Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie*, 229. J. Mulder is particularly guilty of this procedure. He goes so far as to assert that the "Mighty God" (אל נבֹרֵךְ) of Isaiah 9:6 must mean something less than true deity. But he fails to grapple with the fact that the word אל is never applied to men or angels in the Bible. It always means "God."

171. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of James* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966), 54.

172. Harris, 197.

173. Ibid., 215. See Moule, 32; Cullmann, 310; John Owen, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Marshallton, Del: NFCE, 1969), 2:180-183; Yeager, 16:94; F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 19; Warfield, *The Lord of Glory* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 280; Reymond, 294-301; Alford, 4:20. For further references see Harris, 217.

174. Authur W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), 59.

175. See: *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie*, 237-242, for an interesting discussion of this point.

176. RVS, Wuest, NASB, NIV, NEB, Goodspeed, Moffatt, GNB, TCNT, etc.

177. Robertson, *Grammar*, 127, 785-786; Moule, 109-110; Blass and Debrunner, 144-145, sec. 276.

178. Cullmann, 314; Bultmann, 1:129; Yeager, *ibid.*, 17:192; Liddon, 304; Warfield, *Studies*, 269-270; etc.

179. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of I and II Epistles of Peter, the Three Epistles of John, and the Epistle of Jude* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966), 252-253.

180. Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 6:147-148.

181. Wuest, 3:32-33.

182. Warfield, *The Lord of Glory*, 270.

183. Middleton, 595.

184. Gordon Clark, *II Peter* (Phillipsburg: P & R: 1972), 6.

185. Charles Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of St. Peter and St. Jude* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1902), 270.

186. Reymond, 287-291.

187. Brown, 22.

188. Harris, 238.

189. Brown, 23.

190. Lenski, 542-544; Morgan and Cox, 516.; Marshall, 254-255; Candlish, 564; Warfield, *Lord of Glory*, 273; Brown, 18-19; Cullmann, 310; Bultmann, 2:865; Reymond, 310-312. For more references see Harris 249, n. 28 and Reymond, 312.

191. Robertson, *Grammar*, 702. See also *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*: "οὗτός is used to point to someone previously mentioned the subject which is continued in the discussion" (151).

192. Brown, 18.

193. Robert Candlish, 564.

194. Morgan and Cox, 516.

195. Marshall, 254, n. 47.

196. Ibid. 254-255.

197. Lenski, 543.

198. Harris, 289.

199. For a discussion of Colossian gnosticism, see J.B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), 73-113; Ellicott, 8:120-124; John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), xxx-xxxix.

200. Alford, 3:218; *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 3:523;

201. Lange, 11; *Colossians*, 45; Wuest, III, *Treasures*, 76; *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 3:523; Lightfoot, 146; Yeager, 15:58; Vincent, 487.

202. Lightfoot, 264.

203. See Hendriksen's discussion of this point.

204. Rienecker and Rogers, 573.

205. Hendriksen, 111-112. See also H.C.G. Moule, *Colossians and Philemon Studies* (Ft. Washington, PA: Christian Lit. Crusade, 1975), 144.

206. Balz and Schneider, 2:273-274; Arndt and Gingrich, 425.

207. Lightfoot, 257. His discussion of πλήρωμα (257-273) is still the best treatment available. H. Meyer: "the fullness of the Godhead in the ontological, and not the simply mystical or morally religious sense is meant" (294).

208. Ibid., 265

209. Balz and Schneider, 2:143; Arndt and Gingrich, 359; Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 491; Rienecker and Rogers; Moule, Alford; Lange; Warfield, *Lord of Glory*, 236; *Expositor's Greek Testament*; Eadie, 141; Yeager, Lenski; Dallie; Hendriksen; Vincent; Ellicott, etc.

210. Thayer, 288.

211. Wuest, 76.

212. Moule, 144.

213. Richard Chenevix Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 8.

214. Robertson, *ibid.* See also Balz and Schneider, 3:325; Arndt and Gingrich, 807; Rienecker and Rogers, 573.

215. Eadie, 144.

216. Robertson, 5:158-159. See also Godet, 1:122; Hengstenberg, 1:474, etc.

217. *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* (Brooklyn: Watchtower, 1950), 312, The footnote states: "I have been—ἐγὼ εἶμι . . . properly rendered in the perfect indefinite tense. It is not the same as ὁ ὢν (ho ohn, meaning "the Being" or "The I Am") at Exodus 3:14, LXX."

218. *The Watchtower*, Feb. 15, 1957, 126.

219. Brooks and Winberry, 87. See also Blass and Debrunner: "The historical present can replace the aorist indicative in a vivid narrative at the events of which the narrator imagines himself to be present" (167).

220. Robertson, *Grammar*, 880.

221. Walter R. Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1977), 78, n. 34.

222. Alford, *ibid.*, 1:802.
223. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963), 72.
224. *Christ the Lord*, 30.
225. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960), 329.
226. *Ibid.*, 343.
227. Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1965).
228. Charles Francis Digby Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1977), 36.
229. *Ibid.*
230. *Ibid.*, 37-38.
231. Balz and Schneider, 2:330.
232. *Ibid.*, 509; Arndt and Gingrich, 907.
233. Thayer, 366.
234. A.T. Robertson, 5:83.
235. Hendriksen, John, 196.
236. Balz and Schneider, 3:357.
237. Robertson, 86.
238. Richard Bauckham, "The Worship of Jesus in Apocalyptic Christianity" (*New Testament Studies*, [Cambridge University], vol. XXVII, 1981,) 322-341.
239. R.T. France, "The Worship of Jesus," in *Christ the Lord*, 30. See also Ralph P. Martin, "Some Reflections on New Testament Hymns," 40.
240. F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 51.
241. Gloag, 64. See also Alexander, 35.

242. Ibid., 264.

243. Bruce, 171.

244. France, 33. See also Ralph P. Martin, "Some Reflections On New Testament Hymns," in *Christ the Lord*, 37-49.

245. Robertson, 4:634.

246. Fairbairn, 402.

247. Hendriksen, 328; Ellicott, 244; Meyer, 273; Lange, 118; *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 183; Robertson, 164, etc.

248. Calvin, 12:215; Owen, 4:480; Meyer, 9:743; Ellicott, 8:348; Lenski, 496; *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 4:380.

249. Alford, 4:272; Lange, 11:219.

250. Brown, 723-724; Pink, 1285.

251. Robertson, 6:126.

252. Lenski, 199-200; Lange, 78; Alford, 376; Meyer, 320.

253. *Expositor's Greek Testament*, 5:73.

254. Calvin, 12:368.

255. Robertson, 287.

256. France, 33.

Chapter Eighteen

God the Holy Spirit

As we approach the subject of the Holy Spirit, the first question we must encounter is where do we begin? Obviously, we all approach the subject with certain *a priori* assumptions. The Unitarians begin with the assumption that the Spirit is an impersonal force or power and is neither a person nor God. In opposition to this, Trinitarians begin with the assumption that the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son constitutes the Christian God. Clearly, the issue is not who has *a priori* assumptions, but whose assumptions are vindicated by good and sufficient reasons.

Since we should logically begin with what has already been previously established, historical precedent is very important. Since we have already demonstrated that the Old Testament and the early Jewish Literature both teach the personhood and deity of the Spirit, the Trinitarian is perfectly justified when he begins with that as his *a priori* assumption. He is merely following the historical precedent. For example, Josephus refers to the Holy Spirit as "the divine Spirit" (τοῦ θεοῦ πνεύματος) in his *Antiquities of the Jews*.¹ The Spirit is clearly portrayed as a person and as God.

On the other hand, the Unitarians have no historical precedent for their denial of the personhood and deity of the Spirit. Thus, the burden of proof falls on them to show where the New Testament explicitly denies those doctrines. But they have yet to find a single passage in the New Testament where the personhood and deity of the Holy Spirit are explicitly denied.

Exegetical verification is the second step in vindicating an assumption. If the authors of the New Testament believed in the personhood and deity of the Holy Spirit, how would they express this in the language of their day? For example, wouldn't they use personal pronouns such as "He" to refer to the Spirit? We would expect them to do so.

The Personhood of the Spirit

Since the Trinitarian begins with the *a priori* assumption that the Holy Spirit is a Person, he expects to find in the New Testament that the Spirit manifests the attributes of personhood, i.e., the Spirit will be described by the authors of the New Testament as doing and saying those things which

only a *person* can do or say. And when we turn to the New Testament, this is exactly what we find.

The very same evidence that demonstrated the personhood of the Father and the Son likewise demonstrates the personhood of the Holy Spirit. For example, just as our communion with the Father and with the Son reveals their personhood, even so our communion with the Spirit reveals His personhood:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.
(II Cor. 13:14)

Ἡ χάρις τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν. ἀμήν.

As Gordon Fee points out, "In many ways, this benediction is the most profound theological moment in the Pauline corpus."² According to Heinrich Meyer, it clearly speaks of our "participation in the gracious efficacy of the Holy Spirit."³

In I John 1:3, we have fellowship with the Father and with the Son. Now in II Corinthians 13:14, using the same exact words, we have fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Can words be any plainer?

κοινωνία μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς
κοινωνία μετὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ·
κοινωνία μετὰ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος

In order to have fellowship with the Father and with the Son, requires that they are persons. The same holds true for fellowship with the Holy Spirit. In order to have communion with Him, He must be a person. A.W. Pink explains:

Let it be duly weighed that "communion" is a *mutual* thing, a giving and receiving, In our communion with the Father we receive from Him, and then return to Him love and obedience. From the Son we receive life and acknowledge it in our praises. From the Spirit we receive regeneration and sanctification, shall we render Him nothing in return?⁴

This one verse is sufficient to overthrow the erroneous idea that the Holy Spirit is only an impersonal force or power. Lenski is absolutely correct when he states:

The personality of the Spirit is often denied by rationalism. Only a person can establish communion. The Holy Spirit is there named beside the other two persons.⁵

The Attributes of Personhood

The exegetical evidence for the personhood of the Spirit is overwhelming. The Holy Spirit "hears" (John 16:13), "searches all things" (I Cor. 2:10), "speaks" (Mark 13:11), "teaches" (John 15:26), "convicts of sin, righteousness, and unbelief" (John 16:8), "comforts" (John 16:7), "guides" (John 16:13), "glorifies Christ" (John 16:14), "reveals" (John 16:14), "forbids" (Acts 16:6-7), "intercedes" (Rom. 8:26), "brings to remembrance" (John 14:26), "separates" and "sends" out people (Acts 13:1-4), "sets" elders over the church (Acts 20:28), etc.

These actions of the Spirit require intellect, emotion, and will. How can the Spirit choose and appoint leaders in the church with knowing, being pleased with, and choosing the right men (Acts. 20:28; 13:1-4)?

The fact that the Holy Spirit speaks to people giving them detailed information cannot be so easily ignored. The detailed information given by the Spirit requires both intelligence and personhood on His part as well as the people to whom He speaks. For example, Mark 13:11 has in focus a court room situation in which the Holy Spirit will give the believer legal arguments for his defense:

"And when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but *it is the Holy Spirit.*"

The Holy Spirit will reveal to the persecuted believer what he needs to say in court! This means specific and detailed information. An impersonal force or power cannot do this. The Holy Spirit has to be a Person in order to give this kind of detailed legal information.

While Mark. 13:11 sets forth the principle, the book of Acts records the application. Peter's trial recorded in Acts 5:32 not only illustrates how the Holy Spirit helps persecuted believers, but also has a direct statement about the Spirit that proves His personhood.

And we are witnesses of these things; and *so is the Holy Spirit*.

Peter was on trial for his life and claimed that he and the other apostles saw the risen Christ with their own eyes and would swear to this fact in court as “witnesses” (μάρτυρες). Then he adds that the Holy Spirit was also a “witness” (μάρτυς) to the resurrection.

The word μάρτυς is often used in the New Testament in its legal or forensic sense (Matt. 18:16; Luke 22:71, etc.). That it is used here is clear from verses 5:17-18, 27-40. It is inconceivable that the Holy Spirit would be called upon as a “witness” of the resurrection of Christ if He were not a person. William Biederwolf states:

How the idea of the Holy Spirit as a distinct personality could be more clearly set forth than is done in the Word of God is impossible for an unbiased mind to conceive.⁶

The same holds true for all the other times the Holy Spirit spoke:

The Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and join this chariot.” (Acts 8:29)

The Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you. But arise, go downstairs, and accompany them without misgivings; for I have sent them *Myself*.” (Acts 10:19-20)

The Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” (Acts 13:2)

“This is what, *The Holy Spirit* says: ‘In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’” (Acts 21:11)

And because you are sons, God has sent forth *the Spirit* of His Son into our hearts, *crying*, “Abba! Father!” (Gal. 4:6)

This kind of detailed speech requires an intelligent Speaker. Specific information, directions, and commands are spoken by the Spirit.

The Spirit is the One who decides which gift to give to believers:

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as *He wills*. (I Cor. 12:11)

πάντα δὲ ταῦτα ἐνεργεῖ τὸ ἔν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ
Πνεῦμα, διαιροῦν ἰδίᾳ ἐκάστῳ καθὼς βούλεται.

The word βούλεται "as He wills" is the present indicative of βούλομαι and must grammatically refer back to the Holy Spirit. The use of the present tense is significant. Rienecker and Rogers comment:

The present tense emphasizes the habitual or repeated action. He gives not according to the merit or wishes of men but according to his own will.⁷

We have yet to see an impersonal force make such decisions. The Arian and Unitarian claim that the Holy Spirit speaks, but is not a Speaker, leads, but is not a Leader, witnesses, but is not a Witness, comforts, but is not a Comforter, intercedes, but is not an Intercessor, guides, but is not a Guide, etc., goes against all logic and reason. How can the Holy Spirit intercede in prayer on our behalf, if He is only an impersonal power or force (Rom. 8:26)? How can He know our needs and pray for us unless He is a person? No wonder George Smeaton exclaims:

To deny that there is any allusion to a person in such references to the Spirit, betrays either deep-seated bias and prejudice, or lack of exegetical aptitude and capacity.⁸

The Use of Personal Pronouns

The use of personal pronouns in reference to the Spirit in such places as John 15:26; 16:7, 13 cannot be ignored as irrelevant:

"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, *who* proceeds from the Father, *He* will bear witness of Me." (John 15:26)

"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send *Him* to you." (John 16:7)

The personal pronouns "He," "who," and "Him" all refer to the Spirit. This cannot be denied. Only a person can do these things.

We must, also, point out that to exchange a personal Jesus for an impersonal power would hardly be to our "advantage." Jesus said that the

Spirit would come to help and comfort us, and that this would be to our *advantage*. Octavius Winslow comments:

If a distinct personage is not spoken of in these passages, language has lost its power to describe what a person really is, or to convey to us an intelligent idea of his existence. But our Lord was speaking of an exchange of persons. It was a Divine and intelligent person that was to depart, and it was a Divine and intelligent person that was to supersede Him in the church, abiding with it for ever.⁹

While the pronoun is masculine, the word “spirit” is neuter because the word can refer to many different things (God, angels, demons, man, the age, etc.). Thus, we would naturally expect to find only the neuter used in reference to the Spirit. But the authors of Scripture went out their way to use personal pronouns for the Spirit. This fact is significant. Prof. Gans explains:

The contrast between the masculine and neuter, according to the peculiar genius of the Greek language, gives a boldness to the conception of personality which is very striking. The neuter pronoun “it” would evidently be the proper word, instead of the masculine “He,” “Who,” “Him,” if the Holy Ghost were a mere power, or attribute, or influence. “He” is the proper exponent of personality; and in its relation, here to the Holy Ghost—a relation constituted by Christ Himself—it is the clear outward verbal sign of this fact in Him.¹⁰

But why were neuter pronouns used in a few places to refer to the Holy Spirit? Doesn’t the use of the neuter mean that the Spirit is not a person? Not at all! We have already shown that both the Father and the Son are referred to at times by the *neuter* gender. But who uses that fact to deny their personhood? In the same way, just because the neuter is used of the Spirit does not deny His personhood either.

Another proof of the personality of the Holy Spirit is found in the fact that He can be “grieved” (Eph. 4:30), made to “feel good” (Acts 15:28), “lied to” (Acts 5:3), “sinned” against (Matt. 12:31), “resisted” (Acts 7:51), and “insulted” (Heb. 10:29). It is impossible to attribute such language to an impersonal force or power.

Romans 15:30 becomes very important at this point:

Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by *the love of the Spirit*, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.

Once again the Spirit is appealed to in conjunction with another person. Paul appeals to the Lord Jesus and to the Spirit as motivations for prayer. In his appeal, Paul refers to “the love of the Spirit” (τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Πνεύματος).

Such language is not foreign to Paul. When he refers to the love of God the Father (Rom. 5:5), he means His love to us, not our love to Him. The same is true when he speaks of the love of Christ (Eph. 3:19). It is Christ’s love for us, not our love to Him. The literary parallels are obvious.

ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς	the love of the Father	His love for us.
ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ υἱὸς	the love of the Son	His love for us.
τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Πνεύματος	the love of the Spirit	His love for us.

To argue that it cannot refer to the Spirit’s love because the Spirit is not a person is to argue in a circle. If we take these words in their normal meaning, then this passage contains a reference to the love which the Spirit has for the saints. John Murray explains:

There is no good reason why it should not be taken as the love which the Spirit bears to believers. Besides, since “the love of the Spirit” is coordinated with “our Lord Jesus Christ” there is good, if not decisive, reason for the view that the love of the Spirit to us is intended . . . what could enforce Paul’s request more than to be reminded of the Spirit’s love? As God’s love inspires and validates hope (5:5), so the Spirit’s love should incite to prayer.¹¹

That “the love of the Spirit” motivates us to love one another does not negate that fact that He loves us. Neither does the fact that the Spirit pours the love of the Father into our hearts (Rom. 5:5). Romans 15:30 refers to the love of the Holy Spirit that He manifests to us and in us as He guides us along the path of sanctification.

Not only is there a vast amount of positive exegetical evidence for the personhood of the Spirit, but the Bible explicitly denies that the Spirit is God’s power in such places as Zechariah 4:6:

Then he answered and said to me, "This is the word of [Yahweh] to Zerubbabel saying, '*Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,*' says [Yahweh] of hosts.

Yahweh Himself makes the clear distinction between His power and the Holy Spirit. It would be ludicrous to think that Yahweh said, "Not by power but by power." The same problem is seen in Romans 15:13, "the power of the Holy Spirit." Are we to believe that Paul was saying "the power of the power"? It would be redundant to say, "with the Holy Spirit *and* with power" (Acts 10:38) if it meant, "with power and with power." This phraseology is not compatible with the reduction of the Spirit to a mere impersonal power or force.

After surveying all the evidence, the "Prince of Princeton," Dr. Charles Hodge, concludes:

He is introduced as a person so often, not merely in poetic or excited discourse, but in simple narrative, and in didactic instructions; and His personality is sustained by so many collateral proofs, that to explain the use of the personal pronouns in relation to Him on the principle of personification, is to do violence to all the rules of interpretation.¹²

The Deity of the Spirit

Did the authors of the New Testament reject the Old Testament doctrine of the deity of the Spirit? We do not find any indication in the New Testament that they did so. The burden of proof rests squarely upon those who deny the deity of the Spirit to show chapter and verse where the deity of the Spirit is denied in the New Testament.

What we do find in the New Testament is the same kind of evidence that demonstrated the deity of the Father and the Son. The attempt to say that such evidence is valid when applied to the Father, but not valid when applied to the Spirit or the Son, is the height of irrationality. Once an argument is deemed "valid," it is valid whenever and wherever it applied.

What We Expect to Find

1. The names of God will be applied to the Spirit.
2. The attributes of God will be applied to the Spirit.
3. The works of God will be applied to the Spirit.
4. The words of God will be applied to the Spirit.
5. The worship of God will be applied to the Spirit.

I. Old Testament Names for God

The authors of the New Testament did not hesitate to apply to the Holy Spirit Old Testament passages which originally referred to God. Thus, the Holy Spirit is the God who is in focus in those passages. Several examples will demonstrate this.

Acts 28:25-27

In Isaiah 6:8-10, Isaiah recorded the words of “the Lord” (Heb. אֲדֹנָי LXX κυρίου) who was identified as “Yahweh of armies” (Heb. יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת LXX κύριος σαβαωθ) in verse 3. In Acts 28:25-27, Paul quotes Isaiah 6:8-10 and applies it to the words of the Holy Spirit:

And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, *“The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, saying, ‘GO TO THIS PEOPLE AND SAY, “YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES; LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I SHOULD HEAL THEM.”’*”

Before Paul quotes from Isaiah 6, he points out that it was the *Holy Spirit* Himself who spoke these words. Thus, the Holy Spirit is “the Lord Yahweh of Armies” who spoke the words found in Isaiah 6.

When the Jews rejected the gospel, they were not just rejecting Paul. No, they were rejecting the Holy Spirit. And to reject the Spirit is to reject Yahweh. R.J. Knowling, professor of New Testament Exegesis at King's College, London, explains:

The solemnity of the words is intensified by thus introducing the Holy Ghost, rather than merely the human agent, as Himself speaking; and not only so, but by thus intimating that they were resisting not man, but God, cf. vii. 51.¹³

Notice, also, that the Holy Spirit is the One who can “heal” rebel sinners by giving them repentance and faith. Who else but God can do this?

Hebrew 10:15

In his demonstration of the superiority of the new covenant over the old covenant, the author of Hebrews quotes from Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Heb. 10:15-17 *And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, "THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND UPON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM," He then says, "AND THEIR SINS AND LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE."*

The personhood of the Spirit is established from the fact that He is called upon to give His testimony, as if He were in a court of law, and because it is the Holy Spirit who sets up the new covenant and forgives the sins of the people of God. How can an impersonal power do that? It can't.

The deity of the Holy Spirit is established from the fact that, when we go back to Jeremiah 31:31-34 to see who said the words attributed to the Spirit in the book of Hebrews, we find that it was Yahweh (Heb. יהוה LXX κύριος) who spoke these words.

It is the Holy Spirit who, by His wondrous work of regeneration, implants the law into our hearts and forgives us of our sins and lawless deeds. It would be blasphemous to attribute such things to an impersonal force or power. Only God can regenerate the heart of man and forgive his sins.

Acts 5:9

Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test?"

In the Old Testament we are warned, "You shall not tempt Yahweh your God" (Deut. 6:16). When we act in an irreverent and immoral behavior, we tempt God to punish us on the spot. The Jews in the wilderness "tempted the Lord" and were destroyed for it:

Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. (1 Cor. 10:8-10)

Jesus even warned the devil not to tempt the Lord (Matt. 4:7). The Old Testament background of "tempting the Lord" gives us the key to interpreting Peter's words:

Why is it that you have agreed together to *put the Spirit of the Lord to the test?*" (Acts 5:9)

To lie to the Holy Spirit is to tempt Him to punish you on the spot. Is this not what happened to Ananias and Sapphira? Were they not struck dead on the spot? Thus the Holy Spirit is identified with the Yahweh of Deuteronomy 6:16 who is not to be tempted.

II Corinthians 3:15-18

In II Corinthians 3:17, the Holy Spirit is directly called "the Lord" (κύριος).

But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a man *turns to the Lord*, the veil is taken away. Now *the Lord is the Spirit*; and where *the Spirit of the Lord* is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror *the glory of the Lord*, are being trans-formed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from *the Lord, the Spirit*. (II Cor. 3:15-18)

This passage has generated much discussion down through the centuries. The identity of "the Lord" (ὁ Κύριος) and "the Spirit" (τὸ Πνεῦμα) has been a controversial issue because of their Trinitarian significance.

The Identity of "the Lord"

The passage is obviously an application of various Old Testament texts and phrases. Thus, the title "the Lord" (ὁ Κύριος) must be interpreted in its Old Testament significance, i.e., Yahweh. This is clear from the fact that Paul is alluding to Exodus 34:34-35:

But whenever Moses went in before [Yahweh] to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. So Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him.

In terms of the immediate context, Paul takes the story of the veil Moses used to hide his face and uses it as a metaphor to explain why the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah:

And are not as Moses, who used to put a veil over his face that the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away. But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed by Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart.
(II Cor 3:13-15)

In verse 14, Paul states that the Jews are spiritually blind until the veil of unbelief is removed by the Messiah (ἐν Χριστῷ). But once, they “turn to the Lord” (ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον), the veil is removed:

But whenever a man *turns to the Lord*, the veil is taken away.
(II Cor. 3:16)

When someone “turned to the Lord” in the Old Testament, this meant that he placed his ultimate faith for salvation in Yahweh alone (Isa. 45:22). The “Lord” to whom he turned was always YHWH.

“Turn to the LORD”

Text	Hebrew	Septuagint
Deut. 30:10:	תָּשׁוּב אֶל־יְהוָה	ἐπιστραφῆς ἐπὶ Κύριον
Psa. 22:27	וְיָשׁוּב אֶל־יְהוָה	ἐπιστραφήσονται πρὸς κύριον

Paul is clearly following the Septuagint when he writes: ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον. Conversion takes place when a sinner turns to Yahweh.

The second Old Testament phrase is found in verse 17: “the Spirit of the Lord.” There are twenty-four references to “the Spirit of the Lord” in the Old Testament and, in each case, it is the Spirit of *Yahweh* who is in view.

The third phrase, “the glory of the Lord” (v.18), is found thirty-five times in the Old Testament and it also refers to the glory of *Yahweh*.

Finally, that the title “the Lord” refers to Yahweh is also confirmed by Targum Jonathan. Numbers 7:89 is a parallel passage to Exodus 34:34. In both passages, it is Yahweh who speaks to Moses. A comparison of the Hebrew text, the Septuagint, and the Targum on Numbers 7:89 reveals that the “Yahweh” who was speaking to Moses was actually “the Spirit.”

The Hebrew text has Moses hearing:	"Him." (YHWH cf. 8:1)
The Septuagint has Moses hearing:	"the voice of the Lord."
The Targum JI has Moses hearing:	"the voice of the Spirit."

The Targumist scholar Martin McNamara explains:

A comparison of the text and context of 2 Cor. 3,17 with TJI to Ex 34 and the parallel passage of Nm 7,89 appears to indicate that the Apostle is under the influence of the paraphrase in TJI when he affirms that "the Lord is the Spirit." In TJI Nm 7,89 we read that in the Tent of Meeting Moses conversed with "the Spirit" which for Judaism was Yahweh as he revealed his will to his people, The "Lord" for Paul in 2 Cor 3,17 would then be the God of Israel of which the OT and Tg speak, rather than Christ.¹⁴

Paul was familiar not only with the Hebrew text and the Greek Septuagint, but also with the Aramaic Targums. In Targum JI, the Yahweh who speaks to Moses is the Spirit. This is why Paul states in II Corinthians 3:17, "the Lord is the Spirit."

Given the Old Testament significance of the word "LORD," we can translate the passage as follows:

But whenever a man turns to [*Yahweh*], the veil is taken away. Now [*Yahweh*] is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of [*Yahweh*] is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of [*Yahweh*], are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from [*Yahweh*], the Spirit. (II Cor. 3:16-18)

The Identity of the Spirit

The vast majority of commentators agree that when Paul said, "Now the Lord is the Spirit," the word "Spirit" (τὸ Πνεῦμα) refers to the Holy Spirit. The Arian attempt to reduce the word "Spirit" to "spirit" and interpret it as a reference to the "spiritual nature" of Jesus is in such conflict with the context that no exegete holds to it today.

This remarkable passage not only demonstrates the personhood of the Spirit as He transforms us from glory to glory, but it is also clear that Paul took the Old Testament title "Yahweh" and applied it to the Spirit. Who is the "Yahweh" who spoke to Moses? The Spirit. Who is the "Yahweh" to

whom we turn in conversion? The Spirit. As Francis Martin points out, it is clear that:

Paul is truly giving his own adapted exegesis of Ex 34,34 in 2 Cor 3,17-18 and that he is maintaining that knowledge of Christ is to be had by conversion to the Spirit.¹⁵

Paul is careful not to give the impression that he is reducing Yahweh to the Spirit, as if the Spirit was the sum total of Yahweh. The Spirit is also described in verse 17 as “the Spirit *of* Yahweh.” The word “of” is the genitive of origin meaning that the Spirit is sent *from* Yahweh. Thus, there are two Yahwehs mentioned in the text—the Spirit who is Yahweh and the Yahweh who sent the Spirit. This reflects the Old Testament concept of the multi-personal nature of Yahweh seen in such places as Genesis 19:24.

New Testament Names for God

Since the Holy Spirit is identified with the divine name “Yahweh” (יהוה) and the divine titles “Lord” (אֲדֹנָי) and “Yahweh of Armies” (יְהוה צְבָאוֹת), it is no surprise to find the authors of the New Testament applying the words “God” (θεός) and “Lord” (κύριος) to the Holy Spirit.

The Word “God” (θεός)

In Acts 5, we are told the sad story of how Ananias and his wife Sapphira were struck dead for lying:

A certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart *to lie to the Holy Spirit*, and to keep back some of the price of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? *You have not lied to men, but to God.*” And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came upon all who heard of it. And the young men arose and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him. Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter responded to her,

“Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?” And she said, “Yes, that was the price.” Then Peter said to her, “Why is it that you have agreed together *to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test*? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out as well.” And she fell immediately at his feet, and breathed her last; and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things. (Acts 5:1-11)

The personhood of the Spirit is established by the fact that it is impossible to “lie to” (v.3) or “tempt” (v.9) an impersonal force or power. Obviously, you can only lie to or tempt a *person*.

The deity of the Spirit is established by the fact that the syntax indicates that Peter was not saying that the couple lied to the Holy Spirit *and* to God, but that, when they lied to the Spirit, *they were lying to Someone who is God*. Thus, their lie was all the more horrible and deserving of instant death. The Spirit is here called “God” (θεός).

The Word “Lord” (κύριος)

II Thessalonians 3:5

In II Thessalonians 3:5 we read:

And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ.

ὁ δὲ Κύριος κατευθύναι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας εἰς τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ εἰς τὴν ὑπομονὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

There are clearly *three* persons in view:

1. The One who “directs our hearts”: He is called “the Lord” (ὁ Κύριος).
2. “the love of God”: This obviously refers to the Father.
3. “the steadfastness of Christ”: This obviously refers to the Son.

Who then is the “Lord” who directs our hearts to the Father and to the Son? It does not take a rocket scientist to see that the Holy Spirit in His work of sanctification is here referred to as “Lord.” The other options do not make any sense.

Option #1. The “Lord” refers to the Father. Thus, Paul said, “May the Father direct your hearts to the love of the Father.” This interpretation does seem odd. If this is what Paul intended, then he would have written, “May the Father direct your hearts to *His* love.”

Option #2. The “Lord” refers to Christ. Thus Paul said, “May Christ direct your hearts to the steadfastness of Christ.” Once again this interpretation is quite odd and does not reflect Paul’s style of writing.

If we interpret it strictly according to the grammar of the Greek text, we must agree with the Greek Fathers such as Basil the Great, Theodoret, Theophylact, etc., that a third Person is in view, i.e., the Holy Spirit, here called “the Lord” (ὁ Κύριος). The Rev. A.J. Mason, Canon of Canterbury, states in *Ellicott’s Commentary*:

The Person of the Blessed Trinity to whom this guidance immediately belongs is the Holy Spirit. So far, the Greek expositors are right who agreed to consider this a proof of the Holy Ghost’s divinity.¹⁶

John Wesley noted in his commentary that “the Lord is the Spirit, whose proper work this is.”¹⁷

The majority of modern commentators reject this as a reference to the Spirit on the grounds that the Spirit is never called ὁ Κύριος in the New Testament. Of course, this is the same reason they give as to why the Spirit is not called ὁ Κύριος in II Corinthians 3:17. In both instances, their interpretation is based on *circular reasoning*. They both *begin* and *conclude* with the assertion that the Spirit is *never* called ὁ Κύριος. The Werde-Bousset thesis is once again behind the circular reasoning.

One final observation is that, if some name other than “Lord” was in the sentence, would anyone deny that a third person was in view? If the text read, “May Timothy direct your hearts to the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ,” would anyone deny that “Timothy” referred to a third person? We think not.

Once again, we are faced with the problem of whether theology determines grammar or grammar theology. We will stick to the grammar of the text and let our theology follow accordingly.

II. The Attributes of God

Not only is the Spirit called both “God” and “Lord,” but He is described with divine attributes. For example, how can all believers anywhere at any time have fellowship with Him, if He is not omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and eternal (II Cor. 13:14)?

Hebrews 9:14

how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

πόσω μᾶλλον τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς διὰ
Πνεύματος αἰωνίου ἑαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν ἁμωμον τῷ
Θεῷ, καθαριεῖ τὴν συνείδησιν ὑμῶν ἀπὸ νεκρῶν
ἔργων, εἰς τὸ λατρεύειν Θεῷ ζῶντι;

Only God is eternal. This is so fundamental to biblical religion that no one denies that this is what the Bible teaches. In Hebrews 9:14, the Spirit is modified by the adjective “eternal” (αἰωνίου). The Trinitarian is not surprised by this. The Holy Spirit is as eternal as the Father and the Son.

Since Romans 16:26 uses the same word αἰωνίου to refer to the eternity of the Father, it is impossible to avoid the eternity of the Spirit in Hebrews 9:14.

The Eternal Procession of the Spirit

The eternity of the Holy Spirit is underscored by the grammar of the Greek text in John 15:26:

“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is* the Spirit of truth, *who proceeds from the Father*, He will bear witness of Me”

ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ὁ παράκλητος, ὃν ἐγὼ πέμψω ὑμῖν
 παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὃ παρὰ
 τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται, ἐκεῖνος μαρτυρήσει περὶ
 Ἑμοῦ·

This is one of most significant passages on the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. That He is a Person is seen from John's use of the masculine ἐκεῖνος instead of neuter ἐκεῖνο. A.T. Robertson points out that here as well as in John 14:16:

John skips over πνεῦμα and reverts to the gender of παράκλητος. . . . It is more evident therefore in this passage that John is insisting on the personality of the Holy Spirit, when the grammatical gender so easily called ἐκεῖνο.¹⁸

The word ἐκεῖνος is used for emphasis sake. When reading the verse out loud, emphasize the word "*he* will bear witness of Me."

That He is a separate Person from the Father is apparent from the use of the preposition παρὰ in reference to His relationship to the Father. The preposition παρὰ when used in conjunction with such verbs as "sending," indicates that two separate person are in view—The Sender and the One sent.

The word παρὰ identifies the starting point of departure as along side of and separate from the Sender. It is used in verses 27 and 28 to speak of Christ's being sent "from," i.e., "from along side" of the Father. A.T. Robertson comments:

Here παρὰ calls attention to the fact that one is beside the place or person whence he starts.¹⁹

If the Spirit were only a part of the Father, then "it" would have come "out from the Father" (ὁ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς). But this is never said concerning the Spirit. He is always pictured as *along side* of the Father. Yeager translates ὃ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς:

. . . who is proceeding from a place by the Father's side.²⁰

The Greek verb "proceeds" is ἐκπορεύεται which is the third person singular present indicative of ἐκπορεύομαι. Lenski comments:

This tense, however, is what the grammarians properly call a timeless present; it intends to express an act that lies above and beyond all conception of time.²¹

The implications are staggering. Lenski explains:

Just as behind the incarnation and the mission of Jesus we have his *eternal* generation by the Father, so here behind the sending and mission of the Spirit we have the Spirit's *eternal* procession from the Father.²²

Jesus gave three separate phrases. First, He said that He was going to send the Holy Spirit. This was fulfilled at Pentecost. Naturally, the verb "will send" (πέμψω) is in the future tense. Then He identifies the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of truth." Finally, He further identifies the Holy Spirit as the One who has, is, and always shall be *eternally* proceeding from along side of the Father. William Hendriksen comments:

. . . this present tense has been called timeless present. The inter-Trinitarian relationship which is indicated here—the procession of the Spirit—is eternal, that is, it transcends time.²³

The French Commentator, Frederick Godet, agrees:

The change of tense indicates the difference of idea: whom *I will send* and *who proceeds from*. He whom Jesus will send (historically, at a given moment) is a divine being, who emanates (essentially, eternally) from the Father. An impartial exegesis cannot, as it seems to me, deny this sense. . . . They are the reflections of the Trinitarian relations. As the incarnation of the Son rests upon His eternal generation, so the *mission* of the Holy Spirit is related to His eternal *procession* . . .²⁴

Some modern commentators deny there is any reference to the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father in this passage. Once again, they urge us to ignore the grammar of the Greek text. Lenski's reply to them is appropriate:

The blame cast upon the ancient fathers for here finding the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father is unjustified.

Those fathers were right, and these newer men might well learn from them.²⁵

After a great deal of thought and research on this passage, we came to the same conclusion as Smeaton:

Such has been the belief of the Church from the first as set forth in all the creeds. It must be **AS ESSENTIAL TO THE PERFECTION OF THE DIVINE NATURE** that the Father have a Son, and there should be a Spirit proceeding from both. The phrase: *who proceedeth from the Father*, in the present tense, (ἐκπορεύεται), intimates an immanent, internal, ever-during act according to the unchangeable essence of Deity.²⁶

I Corinthians 2:10

For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

ἡμῖν δὲ ὁ Θεὸς ἀπεκάλυψε διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ·
τὸ γὰρ πνεῦμα πάντα ἐρευνᾷ, καὶ τὰ βάθη τοῦ Θεοῦ.

This passage has been described as the clearest evidence for the omniscience of the Holy Spirit. Two phrases stand out in the Greek text as indicating true deity:

1. "the Spirit searches all things": τὸ πνεῦμα πάντα ἐρευνᾷ,

The verb ἐρευνᾷ is in the timeless or gnomic present tense which indicates an *eternal* attribute of the Spirit. His knowledge is all embracing at all times. Rogers and Rienecker explain:

The present tense indicates that which is always true, the gnomic present.²⁷

Findlay notes the significance of this point of grammar:

The phrase describes an Intelligence everywhere active, everywhere penetrating.²⁸

The verb does not indicate that the Spirit has to go out and explore everything. It proclaims that He always knows all things at all times:

Dean Kling: "... it denotes the result of that exploring, i.e., a complete and thorough knowledge."²⁹

Canon Shore: "The word 'searcheth' here does not convey the idea of inquiry for the purpose of acquiring knowledge, but rather complete and accurate knowledge itself."³⁰

Just as the Father "searches the hearts" (ἐρευνῶν τὰς καρδίας, Rom. 8:27) and the Son "searches the minds and hearts" (ἐραυνῶν νεφροὺς καὶ καρδίας, Rev. 2:23), even so the Spirit "searches all things" (πάντα ἐρευνᾷ, I Cor. 2:10). The Spirit is as omniscient as the Father and the Son.

The syntax of the verse has much to tell us. First, notice that πάντα does not have a definite article before it. Thus, it refers to "ALL" in an absolute sense.

Second, notice that πάντα is not in its normal word order *after* the verb. Instead, it is placed *before* the verb. This means that Paul doubly emphasized that the Spirit searches "ALL" in an absolute sense. Lenski comments:

The tense is the timeless present. In one timeless act the Spirit sounds the absolute depths of "all things," πάντα (not merely τὰ πάντα, all that God created and that now exists) in heaven and in earth, millions of them being beyond the human mind.³¹

2. "Even the depths of God": καὶ τὰ βάθη τοῦ Θεοῦ

In order to emphasize that, when he said that the Spirit searches "ALL," he really meant "ALL" in an absolute sense, Paul now adds that this includes the infinite depths of God's very being, essence, attributes, plans, and works!

The word βάθη was originally a nautical term denoting the unfathomable depths of the ocean (Luke 5:4). In opposition to the Gnostics who claimed that they knew the βάθη "depths" of all things, Paul here says that the Spirit alone knows ALL.³² Dean Kling comments:

βάθη Θεοῦ: inmost recesses of God, the otherwise unexplorable depths where His thoughts and volitions have free play, the hidden mystery of His personality which correspond to those mysteries of His kingdom and of all His works and ways which the Spirit reveals. The image is drawn from the sea, whose depths are supposed to be unfathomable and bottomless. (Ps. xxxvi.7; xcii. 6; Job xi.8).³³

As Godet points out, "The *deep things of God* designate God's essence, then His attributes, volitions, and plans."³⁴ Grosheide correctly concludes:

God's omniscience is here especially predicated of the Spirit. He searches the deep things of God: nothing is excluded from His searching.³⁵

What must be in order for what is to be what it is? While the Trinitarian expects to find passages such as this, the Arian does not. Indeed, what Arian would write such exalted language about the Spirit? Only a Trinitarian could or would write such things concerning the Spirit. The great Charles Hodge states:

This passage proves at once the personality and the divinity of the Holy Ghost. His personality, because intelligent activity is ascribed to him; he *searches*; his divinity, because omniscience is ascribed to him; he knows all that God knows.³⁶

The Blasphemy of the Spirit

One last evidence for the deity of the Spirit is found in Matthew 12:31-32:

"Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age, or in the age to come."

It is inconceivable to deny either the personhood or the deity of the Spirit in the light of this passage. The kind of blasphemy referred to in this text clearly requires both the personhood and deity of the One blasphemed. The inherent ontological equality of the Three is also self evident.

The deity of the Spirit is seen from the fact that, if someone blasphemes the Father or the Son, he can be forgiven. But, if he blasphemes the Holy Spirit, it can never be forgiven. It is inconceivable that an impersonal force or power could be so exalted above the Father and the Son.

The Arian claim that the Spirit is merely an attribute of the Father or an exercise of His power cannot stand before this passage. A clear distinction is made in this passage between the Father and the Spirit. If the Spirit

were only a part of the Father, to blaspheme the Father would be to blaspheme the Spirit. But this is not the case. Whoever blasphemes the Father can be forgiven, but not those who blaspheme the Spirit. They must be separate persons.

The Modalist claim that the Spirit is Jesus also falls to the ground before this passage. If the Three were the same person, then to blaspheme the one is to blaspheme the other. But, clearly, to blaspheme Jesus or the Father is not the same as to blaspheme the Spirit. They must be separate persons, otherwise, the passage makes no sense whatsoever.

III. The Works of God

It is the Holy Spirit who applies to us what Christ accomplished according to the plan of the Father. We are chosen by the Father, purchased by the Son, and sealed by the Spirit.

He is the Author of our regeneration (John 3:5) and our Guide throughout life (John 16:13). He is the One who sanctifies us (II Thess. 2:13) and comforts us when distressed (John 16:7). His fellowship quickens and revives us when weary (II Cor. 13:14). He glorifies Christ (John 16:14) and seals us for eternity (Eph. 1:13). He convicts us of sin and brings us to repentance (John 16:8-11). He gives us assurance of salvation (Rom. 8:16). He develops faith, hope, love, patience, and all the other "fruit of the Spirit" in our lives (Gal. 5:22-23). He prays for us when we do not know what to pray for (Rom. 8:26). To do **all** these things He has to be omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, etc. In other words, He has to be GOD.

IV. The Words of God

Throughout the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is described as the divine Author of Scripture. The Word of God is, thus, the Word of the Spirit. For example, we read in Acts 1:16:

Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, *which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David* concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

David understood that what he said did not come from him. It came from the Holy Spirit:

"The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue." (II Sam. 23:2)

Peter traced the Scriptures back to the divine Source:

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved *by the Holy Spirit* spoke from God. (II Pet. 1:20-21)

The words which Paul used when writing his epistles came from the Holy Spirit:

Which things we also speak, not in *words* taught by human wisdom, but in those *taught by the Spirit*, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. (I Cor. 2:13)

The Holy Spirit's role in the inspiration of the Bible is clear evidence of His personhood and His deity.

V. The Worship of God

No true worship is possible without the direct assistance of the Holy Spirit. Since "those that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8), we need the assistance of the Spirit in every act of worship.

In Philippians 3:3, we learn that we must "worship in the Spirit." In I Corinthians 12:15-16, we sing, pray, and bless God "with the Spirit." All true prayer is done "in the Spirit," by His power and guidance (Eph. 6:18; Jude 20). We have access to the Father through the Son by the Spirit according to Ephesians 2:18. Thus, the Holy Spirit is involved in every act of worship.

As to the direct worship of the Holy Spirit, II Corinthians 13:14 is more than sufficient to bear the weight of the doctrine. Whatever "fellowship" means when applied to the Father and to the Son also means the same when applied to the Holy Spirit. We "commune" or have "fellowship" with the Father and Son by our prayers and praise. The same is true of our fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

It is, thus, no surprise to see the Holy Spirit invoked along with that of the Father and the Son in the act of baptism. We must remember that baptism is as much an act of worship as the Lord's Supper. As the baptizer, the baptized, and the congregation worship God by observing this holy act of obedience, they are fulfilling the command of the Head of the Church who said:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and *the Holy Spirit*." (Matt. 28:19)

Smeaton comments:

The doctrine of the Spirit was accepted from the earliest age as an elementary truth in connection with the baptismal formula by young and old, by learned and unlearned. This formula was a rudimentary truth to every baptized man: for there never was a time when a Christian disciple did not confess the Deity and saving work of all three Persons of the Godhead.³⁷

The Lord of the Harvest

Finally, many commentators have seen, in Matthew 9:38, a prayer to the Holy Spirit:

"Therefore beseech *the Lord of the harvest* to send out workers into His harvest."

Who is the "Lord of the Harvest"? The One who sends forth missionaries and pastors to reap the fields that are white unto harvest. When we turn to the book of Acts, it is the Holy Spirit who sent forth Barnabas and Paul on their missionary tour (Acts 13:1-4). It is the Holy Spirit who appoints elders to rule over the local church (Acts 20:28). A.W. Pink concludes that the Holy Spirit is the "Lord of the Harvest" because:

It is the Holy Spirit who now appoints the laborers, equips them, assigns their work and blesses their efforts.³⁸

Conclusion

The Bible begins with the Holy Spirit superintending the molding of the old Creation (Gen.1:2). He is subsequently seen at work throughout redemptive history as the One predicting and preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah. His presence and gifts empowered the apostles as they established and extended the Christian Church. The Bible then ends with the Spirit calling us to come to the New Creation (Rev. 22:17). In all these ways His personhood and deity shine forth with light indistinguishable and full of glory.

Notes

1. *Antiquities of the Jews*: IV:108, 118; VI:166, 222; VIII:408; X:239.
2. Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendriksen, 1995), 363.
3. Meyer, 6:710-711.
4. Arthur W. Pink, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), 107.
5. R. C. Lenski, *The Interpretation of I and II Corinthians*, 1341.
6. William Biederwolf, *A Help to the Study of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 27.
7. *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, 429.
8. George Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Edinburgh: Banner, 1974), 102.
9. Octavius Winslow, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (London: Banner, 1972), 16.
10. Daniel Gans, "The Personality and Divinity of the Holy Ghost," *The Mercersburg Review* (1867), 14:466-467.
11. John Murray, *Romans*, 221. This interpretation is also supported by other commentators such as F.J. Leenhardt, C.K. Barrett, and E.F. Harrison.
12. Charles Hodge *Systematic Theology*, 1:524.
13. Henry Alford, *The Expositor's Greek Testament* 2:550. See also, A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 3:488.
14. Martin McNamara, "Targumic Studies," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (1966), 28:18-19
15. Francis Martin, "Christian Unity," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, (XXX, 1968) 215-216.
16. Ellicott, 8:161.
17. *One Volume New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963).

18. A.T. Robertson, *Grammar*, 561.
19. Ibid. 709. See also *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3:12.
20. Yeager, 8:160.
21. Lenski, *John*, 1071.
22. Ibid., 1069-1070.
23. Hendriksen, *John*, 314, n. 196.
24. Godet, *John*, 2:305.
25. Lenski.
26. Smeaton, 114.
27. *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, 391-392. This is also pointed out by Lenski and Vincent.
28. *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, 2:781.
29. Lange, 10:59.
30. Ellicott, 7:29.
31. Lenski, *The Interpretation of I and II Corinthians*, 106.
32. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 1:190.
33. Lange.
34. Godet, *I Corinthians*, 1:148. See also Meyer, 6:52.
35. Grosheide, *I Corinthians*, 68.
36. Hodge, *I Corinthians*, 39.
37. Smeaton, 292.
38. Pink, 185.

Chapter Nineteen

The Trinity in the New Testament

Unitarians as well as Trinitarians speak of the “attributes” of God because the word has become part of the traditional language of God. Yet, when we turn to the original text of the Bible, no author of Scripture ever used the word.¹ It is actually a theological term which was developed by theologians to describe what God *is* in terms of His essential nature.

The words we use to describe the “attributes” of God are not found in the Bible either. Nowhere in the Bible do we find such words as “omnipotent,” “omnipresent,” “omniscient,” and “immutable.” Thus, these words are not *biblical* words *per se*. They are *theological terms* which developed over the centuries.

Does this fact mean that we cannot believe in the “attributes” of God? Of course not! It simply means that as history has progressed, the Christian Church has coined new words to express the old truths of Scripture.

What if someone were to issue the challenge: I challenge you to find the word “attribute” in the New Testament and all such words as “omnipotent,” “omnipresent,” etc. If you cannot find these words in the Bible and if you cannot find them defined in the modern sense, then I refuse to believe in them.

We would look with pity at such convoluted statements. To demand that a first century document use words and terms which did not develop until centuries later is patently absurd. This challenge is an example of the logical fallacy of setting up a “straw man” and then knocking him down.

The word “attribute” is not the issue. It is the idea that the word expresses. The Bible describes God in terms of what He *is* as well as what He does. For example, God *is* “Holy” (Isa. 6:3). Thus, the attributes of God are *implied* throughout the Bible. It does not matter that these “attributes” were not explicitly and systematically defined, documented or defended until centuries later.

The Word “Trinity”

The same situation holds true when we deal with the theological word or term “Trinity.” The word “Trinity” is no more found in the Bible than

the word "attribute." It is a theological term coined by the Christian Church to express the biblical truth that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This is why we do not expect to find in the New Testament the complex creedal statements on the finer philosophic points of the Trinity which took the Church centuries to work out. It would be absurd to demand that the authors of the New Testament must know of, understand, and write out the formulations of the Trinity which did not exist until centuries later. To demand that pre-Nicene authors use post-Nicene terminology is a logical and historical blunder of titanic proportions.

The Trick

The anti-Trinitarians have yet to understand this point. They challenge the Trinitarian to show them in the Bible where the word "Trinity" is found as if this issue meant anything. In the Nov. 1, 1991 *Watchtower* magazine, the Society issued the challenge:

Can I find any Scripture that mentions "Trinity"? Search as you may, you will not find one scripture that uses the word Trinity, nor will you find any that says Father, Son, and holy spirit are equal in all ways, such as in eternity, power, position, and wisdom. (p. 21)

The Watchtower Society is clearly giving its readers the ridiculous impression that, if the word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, then the idea that this word conveys cannot be present. They then go on to challenge the Christian to show them in the New Testament where the doctrine of the Trinity is systematically stated or defined *in its final and full form*:

Was it a teaching of Jesus and his disciples? If so, it should have appeared *fully formed* in the first century of our Common Era. (p. 21)

The trick that is being played is to demand that the doctrine of the Trinity must be found in the New Testament "fully formed" or not at all. That the doctrine could be found in its *infancy* in the New Testament is not discussed.

In the August 1, 1992 *Watchtower* magazine, the Society quotes with approval the challenge issued by the Unitarian Alvan Lamson in 1869:

We challenge any one to produce a single writer of any note, during the first three ages, who held this [Trinity] doctrine *in the modern sense*. (p. 21)

The 19th century Unitarians demanded that the doctrine of the Trinity must be found in the New Testament in “the modern sense” or not at all. They had no concept of the rise and progress of doctrine. They demanded that the “modern sense” of the Trinity be found in the New Testament.

The Rise and Progress of Doctrine

Theology is the living language of the Church which is deepened and enriched as time goes on. The progressive revelation unfolded in Scripture necessitated a progression of doctrine in history. The people of God have always striven to deepen their understanding of what God has revealed.

This means that the post-biblical formulations of the Trinity must be viewed as part of a historical progression of a doctrine which was originally revealed in the New Testament. Nicea is the flower which bloomed from the bud which is found in the Bible.

As with any process, there is a beginning and then later developments. Thus, Nicea was not the beginning of the doctrine of the Trinity. It is one of the high points in its development. Nicea did not invent the Trinity for the first time, as some Unitarians have claimed. The idea that the Three are One was not something novel or new. Nicea was one of the great moments in Church history when the Church was forced to define, document, and defend her doctrines.

The Unitarians during the nineteenth century controversy made a very basic error in logic and historical exegesis. They assumed that the authors of the New Testament could not have believed in the Trinity because they did not use the same exact terms used at the Nicea and later Councils.

They assumed that if such words as “Trinity” did not appear in the New Testament, then the doctrine which those words expressed could not be present either. The Unitarian Chadwick states:

The doctrine of the Trinity was not developed until the Council of Nice, 325.²

Other Unitarians have claimed that the Trinity was not “invented” until the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D., or even later with the Athanasian Creed!³ They made the fatal logical error of confusing the origin of a doctrine with its later formulations.

Even today some anti-Trinitarians argue that the doctrine was invented when the word "Trinity" was first used! To demand that the New Testament writers use terminology not yet developed in their day is ludicrous. Trinitarians do not expect to find the *final* terminology or formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity within the pages of the New Testament. It is absurd to demand that the pre-Nicene apostles must use Nicene or post-Nicene terminology.

New terminology for the Trinity was developed and more precise definitions given as various heresies arose which challenged it. But the liberals forget one irrefutable fact. *In order for the doctrine of the Trinity to be defined and defended against the heretics who were attacking it, it obviously had to already exist.* After all, the early heretics were challenging *something!* They were clearly challenging doctrines that were already in existence. They were objecting to what the Church *already* believed.

The fact that the Church defended the Trinity by carefully defining it in such a way as to answer those heretics and that the Church developed new terminology as part of her defense, proves that she believed in the Trinity from the very beginning.

The Defense of the Faith

The Christian Church has always focused its attention on those doctrines which are under attack at that time. When the New Testament was being written, the apostles were busy answering the heresies of their day. The book of Galatians was written to answer the Judaizers who denied salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Colossians, I John, and II John were written to answer the Gnostics who denied the humanity of Jesus Christ and the Incarnation. The authors of the New Testament responded to those who challenged the Gospel in their day.

As time went on, new heresies arose which required the Church to be more precise in its definitions. Even today the Church has to respond to the heresy of process theology by giving more precise definitions of the omni-attributes of God.⁴ But let it not be forgotten that, when the Christian Church is forced by heretics to be more precise in its understanding and definition of a particular doctrine, this does not mean that the doctrine was not part of her beliefs from the beginning.

The New Testament

When we turn to the New Testament to see whether the Trinity is present, we do not expect or demand that it be present *in its final doctrinal form* worked out by theologians at Nicea and Chalcedon in response to the heresies of their day.

The doctrine of the Trinity was not under attack while the New Testament was being written. The deity of the Messiah and the Spirit were not challenged. There was no need to defend the Trinity because it was not under attack. Thus, we do not expect to find them responding to the heresies which later plagued the Church.

The Rules of Grammar

The science of grammar was not invented until relatively modern times. While we can talk today about gender, number, participles, etc., such terminology was unknown in ancient times. For example, the authors of the New Testament never heard of the “rules” of Greek grammar. They never heard of a “participle” or the “aorist” tense.

Since they did not know the modern rules and terms of grammar, does this mean that the New Testament authors did not know that gender and number should correspond? Does this mean that they were ungrammatical in their use of the Greek language? Of course not. They may not have known the rules, but they knew the grammar.

In the same way, just because the authors of the New Testament did not know the “rules” of the Trinity which were developed centuries later, this does not mean that they did not believe in the grammar of the Trinity. It is everywhere assumed in the New Testament. It lies underneath the surface at all times and then breaks forth in passages of praise to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

What We Expect to Find

What then do we expect in the New Testament? We expect to find the bud of the flower which bloomed at Nicea. We expect to find the authors indicating that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God. We expect to find the multi-personal nature of God in which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are viewed as constituting one God. And this is exactly what we found in the New Testament.

We also expect to find them describing the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in ways which reveal that they assumed that the Three were One in

nature. And lastly, we expect to find the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit described as working together as One to accomplish different goals.

The Unitarians cannot expect to find any of the above in the New Testament. If the authors of the New Testament believed that only the Father was God, as the Unitarians claim, then we should not expect to find the Son or the Spirit called "God." The Three should not be described as "one" in nature or in work.

Whose view was verified by the exegetical evidence? The Trinitarian view was verified in every way possible! In the New Testament, the Three are viewed and worshipped as God. They are not viewed as three gods, but one God. They are not one person, but three persons. That the authors of the New Testament believed in the Trinity is not dependent on their use of such words as "Trinity" or "person." They may not have known of the "rules" of the Trinity, but they sure knew the grammar of it.

The Ontological Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity has been traditionally discussed under two headings: the "*ontological*" Trinity and the "*economical*" Trinity. The word "ontological" is derived from two Greek words—the word *on* which means "being" and the word *lógos* which means "the study of." It has also been called the "transcendent" Trinity.

When we refer to the "ontological" Trinity, we are speaking of the Trinity in terms of its *essential being or essence*. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are viewed as *one in nature*. They are co-eternal, co-equal, co-omni, co-glorious, etc. This is what God *is* from all eternity in and of Himself apart from any divine works.

The Economical Trinity

The "economical" Trinity describes the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as *functioning together as a team* to accomplish some task such as Creation or Providence. Thus, when we speak of the "soteriological" Trinity, we are speaking of the Three functioning together as One in order to bring about the salvation (σωτήριος) of sinners. It has also been called the "immanent" Trinity.

When the Trinity is at work accomplishing something, the Three Persons divide up the roles and responsibilities. This is where subordination comes in. The Son and the Spirit are subordinate to the Father when they function together to bring about salvation. The Father is the Sender and the Son and the Spirit are the Ones Sent to do His will on earth.

Subordination, in the context of the economical Trinity, does not pose any difficulty whatsoever for the Trinitarian. The Father is “greater” than the Son by virtue of His office of being the Sender and Jesus the Sent (John 14:28). That the Father is *greater* in rank does not logically imply that He is *better* in nature.

Some Never Understand

The Unitarians and the Arian cults never seem to understand this point. The questions they ask Trinitarians often stem from their ignorance of the distinction between the ontological and economical Trinity. One frequent question is:

If Jesus is equal to the Father, then how can Jesus submit to the will of the Father? (Matt. 26:39)

This question is an example of what in logic is called a *categorical* fallacy. The first part of the question has to do with the ontological Trinity while the second half has to do with the economical Trinity. To mix the two categories together is a logical fallacy. The question is thus nonsensical. It is paramount to asking, “If a circle is round, then why is a square not round?”

Anti-Trinitarians are also guilty of the fallacy called *false dilemma*. They assume that *either* the ontological Trinity *or* the economical Trinity is true. If one is true, then the other is false. Thus, they falsely assume that we face the dilemma of having to choose between the two. In logic, this is known as the fallacy of false dilemma.

The Trinitarian does not face any such dilemma. There is no logical contradiction between speaking of God in terms of what He *is* and what He *does*. As a matter of fact, what God *does* is determined by what He *is*. For example, the soteriological Trinity is simply the *application* of the ontological Trinity to the plan of salvation. Since the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit *are* one God, the work of salvation is divided between them. This is not a surprise or a difficulty to the Trinitarian.

Ephesians 1:2-14 is a good example. It is a Trinitarian doxology in which the Father is praised for choosing us (Eph. 1:3-6), the Son is praised for dying for us (Eph. 1:7-12), and the Spirit is praised for sealing us (Eph. 1:13-14). The three members of the Trinity are seen working together to accomplish salvation. The following chart may help to clarify these distinctions:

The Trinity

Ontological	Economical
nature	work
being	doing
essence	function

Christian theologians have always pointed out that the economical Trinity presupposes the ontological Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit function as one because they *are* One. Salvation is consistently described in the New Testament as the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit because God *is* triune.

Liberal theologians, of course, have it backwards. They assume that because the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit *function* as one, the early Church made the *mistake* of thinking that they were one in nature. Once again, the liberals are basing everything on the Werde-Bousset thesis which has been discredited time after time.

The soteriological Trinity is the *application* of the ontological Trinity to the eternal divine plan of salvation. The ontological Trinity is also applied to Creation, Providence, and Resurrection as well as to salvation. Whatever God does, He does as a Trinity.

Exact Opposite Views

It is assumed by modern liberals that the first step in any discussion of the Trinity is to set up an "either/or" dichotomy based upon their commitment to the Werde-Bousset thesis. They begin with the *a priori* assumption that the authors of the New Testament did not believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were one God. Instead, they assume that the Church later borrowed that idea from Greek philosophy or pagan religions. We, thus, arrive at exact opposite viewpoints:

Christianity

The ontological Trinity was first.

The economical Trinity was deduced from the ontological Trinity.

It is found in Scripture.

Liberalism

The economical Trinity was first.

The ontological Trinity was deduced from the economical Trinity.

It is not found in Scripture.

The Trinity Everywhere Assumed

The ontological Trinity is everywhere assumed in the New Testament. It is the theological "Given." The truth that God *is* three persons is the basis upon which the New Testament writers could speak so freely of God *working together* as three Persons.

What must be in order for what it is to be what it is? If the New Testament writers believed in the ontological Trinity, they would apply this doctrine to such issues as salvation. Thus, the soteriological Trinity is something we expect to find in the New Testament because it was deduced from their belief in the ontological Trinity.

The Soteriological Trinity

Thankfully, most modern liberals now freely admit that the New Testament clearly speaks of the economical Trinity. The New Testament contains dozens of passages which picture the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit working together as One. This is particularly true of the soteriological Trinity.⁵

How can the soteriological Trinity be so easily discussed and frequently praised in the New Testament, unless the ontological Trinity was already assumed to be true? Does not being precede action? Does not what someone *is* logically precede what someone *does*.

The following chart documents some of the clearer references to the economical Trinity in the New Testament. We have spent a great deal of time on each passage and it is clear to us that anyone who reads these passages with an open mind will see the Three working as One for our salvation. Be it the virgin birth or prayer, the Trinity is seen as the One in Three who accomplished it:

The Economical Trinity

Text	Father	Son	Holy Spirit
Matt. 3:13-17	v. 17	v. 16	v. 16
Luke 1:35	v. 35	v. 35	v. 35
Acts 2:33	v. 33	v. 33	v. 33
Rom. 5:1-6	v. 5	v. 1	v. 5
8:3-4	v. 3	v. 3	v. 4
8:8-9	v. 8	v. 9	v. 9
8:15-17	v. 15	v. 16	v. 17
8:26-30	v. 26	v. 29	v. 26

	15:16	v. 16	v. 16	v. 16
	15:30	v. 30	v. 30	v. 30
I Cor.	2:2-5	v. 5	v. 2	v. 4
	6:11	v. 11	v. 11	v. 11
II Cor.	1:21-22	v. 21	v. 21	v. 22
Gal.	3:1-5	v. 5	v. 1	v. 2
	4:4-6	v. 4	v. 6	v. 6
Eph.	1:3-14	v. 3	v. 7	v. 13
	2:18	v. 18	v. 18	v. 18
	2:19-22	v. 19	v. 20	v. 22
	3:16-19	v. 16	v. 17	v. 16
	4:5-6	v. 6	v. 5	v. 4
	5:18-20	v. 20	v. 20	v. 18
Phil.	3:3	v. 3	v. 3	v. 3
I Thess.	1:3-6	v. 3	v. 6	v. 5-6
II Thess.	2:13-14	v. 13	v. 14	v. 13
Tit.	3:5-7	v. 5	v. 6	v. 5
Heb.	9:14	v. 14	v. 14	v. 14
	10:29-30	v. 30	v. 29	v. 29
I Pet.	1:2	v. 2	v. 2	v. 2
	3:18	v. 18	v. 18	v. 18
	4:14	v. 14	v. 14	v. 14
I John	4:2	v. 2	v. 2	v. 2

That these passages describe the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit functioning together as the economical Trinity is now universally accepted by scholars.⁶ For this reason, we pass on to the issue of the ontological Trinity.

The Ontological Trinity

The ontological Trinity is the basis of Christianity's uniqueness in an ocean of world religions. It is so essential to biblical Christianity that the first step a new convert takes is to be baptized in the name of the Triune God:

Matt. 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them *in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*,
20 Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are invoked as three equal Persons. The Son manifests omnipresence and omniscience by promising to be with all believers at all times in all places throughout this age.

The ontological Trinity is so clear in this passage that some liberals have claimed that it cannot be a part of Matthew's original gospel. It has to be a later interpolation because according to Bousset the ontological Trinity is not a New Testament concept. Besides being circular reasoning, there is no manuscript evidence for such a claim.

From the very beginning of the Church, one's initiation into the Christian community began with an acknowledgment of the Trinity in the act of baptism. Smeaton is absolutely correct when he states:

The Christian Church, from the beginning, believed in the doctrine of the Trinity with unhesitating faith. It was not a conclusion formed gradually in the consciousness of the Christian community, partly by reflection, partly by Biblical inquiry. The Church found in the baptismal formula an emphatic allusion to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and simply accepted it as her doctrine of the Trinity. It was brought within the scope of every Christian mind, learned and unlearned, as the fundamental and the primary truth of which no Christian disciple could plead ignorance. The substance of the doctrine is, that God is one, and that the Persons are distinct; and after all the investigations that have confounded and fatigued the acutest understanding, we only return to the same simple formula of baptism, which is level to the capacity of the humblest.⁷

The Father and the Son

In His pre-incarnate state, the Logos existed "face to face" with the Father (John 1:1). Thus, He was from all eternity God. Even the Incarnation did not lessen His deity. This is why Paul was so careful to say that Jesus remained deity, even when He came to earth and died for us (Phil. 2:6). That this was assumed to be true and part of the Church's beliefs is seen in the hymnody of the early church when they sang hymns to Christ as God. As we have already documented, some of these ancient hymns are either quoted, alluded to or paraphrased in the New Testament itself.

This is also seen by the equality shown between the Father and the Son in the salutations placed at the beginning of most Epistles:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 1:7; I Cor. 1:3; II Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; 6:23; Phil. 1:22; Thess. 1:2; I Tim. 1:2; II Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Philem. 1:3; II John 1:3)

It is that little word "and" that makes this argument irrefutable. Grammatically, the authors are looking *equally* to the Father and the Son for grace, mercy, and peace. They could do this only if they assumed that the Father and Son were equal in nature.

It is now recognized that since these "salutations" can appear later on in an epistle (Eph. 6:23) as well as at the beginning (Eph. 1:2), they are indications of *what* the author is praying for and to *Whom* he addresses those prayers.

The apostles prayed to the Father and to the Son that They might grant the saints grace, mercy, and peace. The apostles looked up to heaven to both of them *equally*. The ontological relationship between the Father and the Son is clearly the assumption which underlies their prayers to them. The deity of the Son is seen from the fact that He has to be omniscient to hear their prayers and eternal, omnipresent, and omnipotent to answer them.

The objection that the Father and the Son are only functioning as equals in all these passages misses the point. They can function as equals only because they *are* equal. The apostles assumed that the Father and the Son were ontologically one nature and equality. Thus, they could function as one.

Spiritual Union

Paul also states in his introduction to the Thessalonian church that the Church was in spiritual union with the Father and the Son *equally*:

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to *the church* of the Thessalonians *in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*:
Grace to you and peace. (I Thess. 1:1)

The Greek is quite clear. τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐν Θεῷ πατρὶ καὶ Κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ. According to the Greek text, is the church in union with the Father? Yes. Is it also in union with the Son? Yes. Are they seen here as equals? Yes. Does this also require that the Lord Jesus Christ be God? Yes. He has to be eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent in order for all churches everywhere at all times in every generation to be in spiritual union with Him at the same time.

I and the Father Are One

The ontological relationship between the Father and Son is clearly stated in John 10:30:

"I and the Father are one."

ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ἓν ἐσμεν

Greek grammarians point out that the Greek word ἓν "one" is not the word we would expect to find. Since two *masculine* persons are in view, we would expect to find the *masculine* εἷς. This would mean that Jesus and the Father are one person. But the word ἓν is neuter and in this passage means that Jesus was saying, "I and the Father are one and the same thing, i.e., nature."⁸

If all Jesus meant by these words was that he and the Father were working together, no one would have objected. But those who standing there and listening to Jesus came to the conclusion that He was claiming to be God by nature (v. 33). As they prepared to stone Him for blasphemy, Jesus could have denied it and told them that He did not mean that He was God. But He did not do this. Instead, He referred them to an Old Testament passages where the judges were called "God."

This passage has proven itself down through the centuries as an effective antidote to Arianism on the left and Modalism on the right. Hendriksen explains:

Note how carefully both the diversity of the persons and the unity of the essence is expressed here. Jesus says, "I and the Father." Hence, he clearly speaks about *two* persons. And this plurality is shown also by the verb (one word in Greek) "we are" (ἐσμεν). These two persons never become one *person*. Hence, Jesus does not say, "We are *one person*" (εἷς), but he says, "We are one *substance* (ἓν)." Though two persons, the two are one *substance* or *essence*. It has well been said that ἓν frees us from the Charybdis of Arianism (which denies the unity of essence), and ἐσμεν from the Scylla of Sabellianism (which denies the diversity of the persons).⁹

The Three in One

The unity of the Three is seen from II Corinthians 13:14:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Paul's prayer indicates that he was praying equally to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That the ontological Trinity is in view is clear from the grammatical equality of the Persons and the attributes necessary for Them to give all believers everywhere at all times and places grace, love, and fellowship. The Son and the Spirit have to be God as much as the Father in order for this benediction to work.

The One in Three

This text is a good example of how the authors of the New Testament wrote down material which could be later used to answer the Arians and the Modalists. While Paul never heard of either Arius or Sabellius, yet through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote down material which in principle refuted both heresies.

Second Corinthians 13:14 is a good example of this. As we have already seen, it clearly establishes that the Three are One in nature. This has been correctly used against the Arians. But, at the same time, it also clearly establishes that the One is Three in Persons. This refutes the Modalists. The Greek text is as follows:

Ἡ χάρις τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη
τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος
μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν. ἀμήν.

The Granville Sharp rule once again applies. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each have the definite article τοῦ before their name and they are separated by the word καὶ. This means that three separate Persons are in view.

There are other passages where the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are grammatically treated as Three Persons, not as one person:

Matt. 28:19 τοῦ Πατρὸς τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος
the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit

II Thess. 3:5 ὁ Κύριος τοῦ Θεοῦ, τοῦ Χριστοῦ
the Lord, God [the Father], the Christ

I Cor. 12:4-6 τὸ Πνεῦμά ὁ Κύριος ὁ Θεός
the Spirit, the Lord, God [the Father]

In each of the passages above, the rules of Greek grammar are operating even though they were not formulated until centuries later.

Different Prepositions

The use of different prepositions also indicates that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are different persons:

for *through* Him we both have our access in one Spirit *to* the Father. (Eph. 2:18)

ὅτι δι' αὐτοῦ ἔχομεν τὴν προσαγωγὴν οἱ
ἀμφοτέροι ἐν ἐνὶ Πνεύματι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα.

The Apostle states that *through* Jesus Christ we gain access *by* the Holy Spirit *to* the Father. The three different prepositions used (δι', ἐν, πρὸς) require three different persons. We already saw this with the preposition "with" (μετὰ) used in First John 1:3 to distinguish between fellowship with believers, the Father, and the Son.

The same can be seen in Second John 1:3 where the prepositions indicate more than more one person is in view.

Grace, mercy *and* peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Conclusion

The authors of the New Testament believed that God was Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They appealed to Them in prayer and worshipped Them. God is Three in One and One in Three at the same time.

Notes

1. Some modern translations such as the NASB have the words, "His invisible *attributes*" in Romans 1:20, but the word "attributes" is not in the Greek text. The Greek text reads, "the invisible of Him" (τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ). The word "attributes" was inserted by the translators and is not part of the original text.
2. Quoted in Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 304.
3. In the Nov. 1, 1991 *Watchtower* magazine (pgs. 20-21), the Society states that the Trinity doctrine did not appear until the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. See also Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 304 for citations from other Arians.
4. Robert Morey, *Battle of the Gods* (P. O. Box 250, Newport, PA: REF, 1989).
5. Gaechter lists 50 Trinitarian texts in the Pauline epistles while Prat lists only 40. See Francis Martin, "Christian Unity," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, (1968), 30:200.
6. See Gordon Fee's detailed discussion of these passages in *God's Empowering Presence*, 19-20, 47-48, 78, 128, 162-163, 293-294, 320, 362-365, 400-401, 446, 495, 538, 554, 590, 625, 627, 630 n. 47, 633 n. 481, 657, 663, 685, 690, 690, 705, 723, 779, 827-829, 839, 898.
7. Smeaton, 4.
8. *Word Pictures*, 5:186-187.
9. Hendriksen, *John*, 126.

Part V

The Historical Evidence

Chapter Twenty

The Early Church

What did the early Christian Church believe about God? What did the Apostolic Fathers think about Jesus Christ? Did they view Him as God and worship Him? Or, did they believe that Jesus was just a nice man who tried to help people?

William Cunningham, Principle of New College, Edinburgh, Scotland, points out in his classic work *Historical Theology* that the witness of the early Church has been claimed by Trinitarians, Arians, and Modalists alike. Since these three contradictory views cannot all be right on this issue, either they are all wrong or one is right and the other two are wrong.

Thus, it is no surprise that the nineteenth century Unitarian controversy became a battle ground over the issue of what the first Christians believed. There was so much controversy over this issue because, as Prof. Cunningham points out, it was obvious that:

... it is in the highest degree improbable, first, if [the Trinity] had been taught by the apostles, it would have soon disappeared from the general teaching of the church; or secondly, that if it had *not* been taught by them, it would have been afterwards devised or invented by men, and would have so widely and extensively prevailed.¹

I believe that Dr. Cunningham was correct. While the testimony of the early Church does not prove or disprove the Bible, it can *corroborate* what different theological systems claim the Bible teaches. While early Church history may *verify* that a doctrine was indeed taught in the first centuries of the Christian Church, it *cannot* establish that doctrine as truth. Only Scripture can determine what doctrines make up the faith once and for all delivered unto the saints (II Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3).

What must be in order for what is to be what it is? If, for example, the early Church believed that Jesus was only a man who was born, lived, and died like any other man, then we would not expect to find the first Christians worshipping Him. We would not expect to find them calling Him "God" or ascribing divine attributes to Him. Thus, their Christology would be verified as being Unitarian in nature.

On the other hand, if the early Church worshipped Jesus in her prayers and hymns of praise and called Him "God," this is exactly what Trinitarians expect to find. The evidence must decide this issue.

What We Do Not Expect to Find

Trinitarians do not expect to find in the literature of the early Church the sophisticated terminology and definitions of the Trinity worked out at Nicea and at later church councils. The Unitarian's demand that the pre-Nicene Church must use sophisticated post-Nicene terminology and definitions is patently absurd.²

What we do expect to find is that the early Christians followed the New Testament in viewing the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as God. It does not really matter that they had not thought through all the implications of this truth, or that they were oblivious to all the sophisticated philosophical questions which would eventually arise.

It was enough for them to baptize new converts in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit whom they worshipped as the one true God. It does not matter that the finer philosophical points of the Trinity were not discussed because the doctrine was still in its formative stage.

The Literature of the Clergy

The opinions of the first clergymen are found in the Apostolic Fathers. We will be primarily using J.B. Lightfoot's five volume edition of the *Apostolic Fathers* because it contains the Greek and Latin texts.³ At times we will also use the Library of Christian Classics⁴ and a recent translation put out by Macmillan.⁵

The Literature of the Common Christian

After discovering what the clergy in the pulpit were preaching, it is interesting to see what the people in the pew understood. This can be discovered by an examination of the New Testament Apocrypha⁶ and the Christian interpolations in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.⁷

The Apostolic Fathers

It is beyond the scope of this book to deal in detail with the first three or four centuries of the Christian Church. This has already been done by

several competent writers. We will, thus, limit ourselves to the literature of the Apostolic Fathers.

This literature rightfully contains not only the manuscripts ascribed to the first Fathers, but also the citations of this literature by later Fathers. For example, 375 A.D. in Basil quoted Clement as saying:

As God liveth and Jesus Christ liveth and the Holy Spirit [liveth] (who are) the faith and the hope of the elect.⁸

Clement clearly appealed to the Three in his oath. He followed the Old Testament pattern when appealing to God which meant that he viewed the Three as God. "As YHWH lives" appears thirty-five times in the Old Testament (i.e., Hos. 4:15) and "as God Lives" twice (i.e., II Sam. 2:27). It is unthinkable that such language would be applied to the Son and to the Holy Spirit if they were not God.

Notice also that he equally appealed to all Three. Thus, they are viewed as equal by Clement. The Three are even said to be the focus of the faith and hope of the elect.

This is exactly the kind of statement that Trinitarians expect to find in the early Church. It does not matter that Clement does not explain *how* or *in what way* the Three are God. It is enough to see that he is making a Trinitarian oath.

The Unitarians at first claimed that Basil's citation from Clement *had* to be erroneous. Using circular reasoning, they argued that he could not have made a Trinitarian oath because the doctrine of the Trinity had not yet been invented! But with the discovery of the Constantinople and Syriac versions of Clement, it is clearly genuine as Lightfoot points out.⁹

The significance of this citation is important. Lightfoot explains:

The points to be observed here are two-fold. *First*; for the common adjuration in the Old Testament, "as the Lord (Jehovah) liveth," we find here substituted an expression which recognizes the Holy Trinity. *Secondly*; this Trinity is declared to be the object or the foundation of the Christian's faith and hope.¹⁰

With this basic introduction, we will now turn to the teachings of the Apostolic Fathers.

Three Separate Persons

The New Testament grammatical distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is maintained throughout the Greek text of the

Apostolic Fathers. In the above citation from Clement, the Greek text reveals that *the* Father, *the* Son, and *the* Holy Spirit each have a definite article in front of their name and they are separated by the word καὶ¹¹ The same is true when we examine the Greek text of the original statement which Basil is quoting. That is found in Clement's *First Letter to the Corinthians* 58:15. (ὁ Θεός . . . ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς . . . τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ τὸ Ἅγιον)

The same can be seen in the Greek text of *Ignatius' Letter To The Ephesians* where the Father and the Son are grammatically distinguished from each other.¹² The Granville Sharp rule once again applies.

The Father is God

We know that the Father is viewed as God because the word Θεός is applied to Him in such places as Ignatius' Letter to the Philippians 1:1. No one interprets the word Θεός as indicating anything less than true deity.

Divine attributes are ascribed to the Father in such places as Clement's Letter to the Corinthians (chs. 20, 27, 28, 33, etc.). The Father does the works of God and His words are the Words of God. In short, He is God by any reasonable measurement.

The Son is God

The following citations reveal that Jesus was viewed and worshipped as true Deity in the context of the Trinity.

Clement

"There is one God, one Christ, one Spirit" (*The Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, XLVI:7)

The Trinitarian structure cannot be denied. As Lightfoot points out, "This mention of Θεός, Χριστός, Πνεῦμα, has a parallel in the reference to the Trinity quoted by S. Basil (de Spir. Sanc. xxxix, III. P. 16) as from Clement, but not found in our MS. . . . The construction and punctuation has been confirmed by the Syriac, since I first proposed it."¹³

"As God liveth, and the Lord Jesus Christ liveth and the Holy Spirit [liveth] who are the faith and hope of the elect" (*First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, 58, Apostolic Fathers, Part I, 2:169.)

Basil's citation of Clement's Trinitarian oath is clearly taken from Clement's first letter to the Corinthians. Fortman comments, "The three are coordinated in an oath. . . . Christ is not called God, but His divinity is implied by His coordination with God in the oath. . . . The Holy Spirit is not called God, but His divinity and personality are implied by His coordination with the Father and the Son in the oath as the object of the faith and hope of the elect and in the attribution to Him of the divine function of inspiration."¹⁴

"My brethren, we must look on Christ as God." (*An Ancient Homily of Clement*, 1:1)

The Greek text is emphatic: περὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὡς περὶ θεοῦ

"For when they hear from us that God said, 'It is no thanks unto you, if you love them that love you, but this is thanks unto you, if ye love your enemies and them that hate you.'" (*An Ancient Homily*, Apostolic Fathers, Part I, 2:312)

Since Jesus is the author of the words quoted Luke 6:32-35, then He is the "God" who said them.

Ignatius

"By the will of the Father and of Jesus Christ our God" (*The Epistle of Ignatius To the Ephesians*, 1:1, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:544)

When it comes to John 1:1, the Unitarians and those who follow them claim that in order for the word "God" (Θεός) to mean absolute Deity it must have the definite article in front of it. In the citation above, Clement refers to Jesus as "God" with the definite article: Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν

Notice also that the Father and the Son are viewed as equals in this salutation.

"The blood of God" (*The Epistle of Ignatius To the Ephesians*, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:544)

"There is only one Physician, of flesh and of spirit, generate and ingenerate, God in man, true life in death, Son of Mary and Son of God, first passible and then impassible, Jesus Christ our

Lord" (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians*, 7, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:545)

"He [i.e., Jesus] Himself may be in us as our God" (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians*, 15, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:548)

"the knowledge of God, which is Jesus Christ" (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians*, 17, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:548)

"For our God, Jesus Christ, was conceived in the womb by Mary according to a dispensation, of the seed of David but also of the Holy Ghost" (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians*, 18, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:549)

Jesus is once again called "God" with the definite article in front of Θεός:

"when God appeared in the likeness of man unto newness of everlasting life" (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians*, 19, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:549)

"Fare ye well in God the Father and in Jesus Christ our common hope." (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians*, 21, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:550)

Jesus is clearly assumed to be equal with the Father in this benediction. The same holds true for the following salutations:

"I wish her abundant greeting in God the Father and in Jesus Christ." (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians*, 1, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:550)

"by faith and by love, in the Son and Father and in the Spirit, in the beginning and in the end" (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians*, 13, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:553-554)

The Trinitarian citation above has been noted for centuries as firm confirmation that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were viewed as one and same God.

... "by faith and love towards Jesus Christ our God" (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans*, 1, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:558)

"Jesus Christ our God" " (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans*, 1, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:559)

"our God Jesus Christ" " (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans*, 3, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:559-560)

"the passion of my God" (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans*, 6, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:561)

"if ye be inseparable from [our] God Jesus Christ" (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians*, 7)

... "the church of God the Father and of Jesus Christ . . . established by His Holy Spirit" " (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians*, 1, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:563)

... "the church of God the Father and of Jesus Christ the Beloved" " (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrneans*, Apostolic Fathers, 1, Part II, 2:567)

"I give glory to Jesus Christ the God who bestowed such wisdom upon you" (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrneans*, 1, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:567)

In the Greek text Jesus is called "the God" (Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν τὸν Θεόν). It never ceases to amaze us that those who deny the deity of Christ will dismiss such passages as John 1:1 because the word "God" (Θεός) does not have the definite article, but then dismiss the passage above and many others where the definite article does appear.

"the blood of Christ [who is God]" (*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrneans*, 6, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:569)

"Ignatius . . . unto Polycarp, who is bishop of the church of the Smyrneans or rather who has for his bishop God the Father and Jesus Christ" (*The Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp*, 1, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:571)

"Await Him that is above every season, the Eternal, the Invisible, who became visible for our sake, the Impalpable, the Impassible, who suffered for our sake, who endured in all ways for our sake." (*The Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp*, 3, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:572)

The attributes of Jesus are the same as attributed to the Father before the incarnation:

"I bid you farewell always in our God Jesus Christ" (*The Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp*, 8, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:574)

The above citations from the Apostolic Fathers is sufficient to show that a concept of the Trinity was functioning in the worship of the early Church. Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit were assumed to be God and equal with the Father. We now turn to quotations attributed to the Apostolic Fathers by later Fathers:

"God the Word became also man for our sakes" (*Roman Acts*, 6, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:583)

"they rose at daybreak and sang a hymn to Christ as God" (*Roman Acts*, 11, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 2:587)

"The Son is therefore called the Word, in order that He might show us that He is from the Father in nature . . . the mixture of God the Word with the flesh which He put on." (John the Monk, Apostolic Fathers, 2:152)

. . . "our God Jesus Christ" (Timotheus of Alexandria, Apostolic Fathers, 2:174)

". . . the suffering of my God" (Timotheus of Alexandria, Apostolic Fathers, 2:174, 176)

". . . the suffering of my God" (Severus of Antioch, Apostolic Fathers 2:181)

". . . the blood of God" (Severus of Antioch, Apostolic Fathers 2:181 18)

". . . Jesus Christ; who before the worlds was with the Father, and in the end was manifest." (Severus of Antioch, Apostolic Fathers 2:181)

"God was manifested as man for the renewal of life without end." (Severus of Antioch, Apostolic Fathers 2:189)

"He was always God" (Severus of Antioch, Apostolic Fathers 2:189)

". . . they believe in the blood of Christ who is God" (Anonymous Syriac Writers, Apostolic Fathers 2:195)

". . . the sufferings of my God" (Anonymous Syriac Writers, Apostolic Fathers 2:197)

". . . the blood of God" (*The Cuneonian Epistles*, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 3:88)

"Jesus Christ our God" (*The Cuneonian Epistles*, Apostolic Fathers, Part II, 3:92)

From the primary source material presented above, it is clear that the early Fathers believed that God was Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They may not have had the sophisticated views of the Trinity which would eventually develop in response to heresies not yet present in their day.

But their faith, hope, and love were in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament Apocrypha

The New Testament Apocrypha is composed of spurious gospels, acts and letters which were written during the early centuries of the Christian Church. They were written by Christians, Gnostics, and heretics. The theological views reflect the chaos that often afflicted the early Church.

Everyone acknowledges that the works in question were frauds, i.e., that were not written by the name of the man put down as the author. For example, the "Acts of Peter" was obviously not written by Peter. But this does not negate the fact that whoever wrote it put into the text what *he* believed. Thus, they have historical worth in that they reveal what the laity understood about God and Christ. If the Unitarian claim that the concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit was not invented until many centuries later, then we would not expect to find Trinitarian statements in the New Testament Apocrypha. But, if the Trinitarians are correct, then we should find the doctrine of the Trinity in this literature as well in the early Fathers.

The following citations abundantly demonstrate that some of those who wrote these apocryphal works believed that God was Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They worshipped the Three in One in their hymns and prayers.

"God says, 'There is no favor for you if you love those who love you, but there is favor for you if you love your enemies and them that hate you.'" (*The Gospel of the Egyptians*, 13:4)

Since Jesus is the author of the words quoted (Luke 6:32, 35), He is here called "God:"

"In the name of God the Father, the ruler of the world, and in [the name of] Jesus Christ. May Grace increase upon you."
(*Epistula Apostolorum* 1:2)

The Father and the Son are equally appealed to in this blessing:

"We know this: our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is God, the Son of God who was sent from God, the Ruler of the entire

world, the Maker and Creator of what is named with every name, who is over all authority as Lord of lords and King of Kings, the Ruler of the rulers, the heavenly One who is over the Cherubim, and Serpahim and sits at the right hand of the throne of the Father . . . And God, the Lord, the Son of God—we believe that the Word, which became flesh through the holy virgin Mary, was conceived in her womb by the Holy Spirit." (*Epistula Apostolorum* 3:1-13)

The author assumes that Christ had two natures—divine and human:

"They are a picture of our faith concerning the great Christianity; and i.e., in the Father, the ruler of the entire world, and in Jesus Christ, our Savior, and in the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete" (*Epistula Apostolorum* 5:2)

This is undoubtedly a Trinitarian statement. What Arian would write such a statement?

"Glory be to thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, who givest to all thy grace which we have all perceived. Alleluia. Glory be to thee, O Lord, the life of sinners. Glory be to thee, O Lord, through whom death is put to shame. Glory be to thee, O Lord, the treasure or righteousness. We praise thee as God." (*The Gospel of Bartholomew*, 4:69)

Jesus is worshipped and praised as God by Bartholomew. This is one of several such doxologies to Christ found in this gospel (see: 4:9):

"Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ . . . by the help of the Holy Spirit." (*The Epistle To the Laodiceans*, 2,7)

The Trinitarian nature of this passage is obvious:

"He who appeared is God and man . . . the Divine Word." (*Apostolic Constitutions* 7.36.1-7)

"Now is the time of refreshment and of confidence in thee, O Christ. Now is the time for us who are sick to have help from thee, O Physician that healest freely. Keep thou my entrance to this place free from derision. I pray thee, Jesus, help this great

multitude to come to thee who art Lord of the universe . . ."
(*Acts of John* 22)

This is one of several prayers of praise and petition to Jesus recorded in this work (i.e., 23, 43, 115). In order for Jesus to receive, hear, and answer such prayers and praise, the author had to view Him as God:

"As the Lord Jesus Christ liveth" (*Acts of John* 28)

Once again, the Old Testament pattern of swearing by the Living God is applied to Jesus in an oath which assumes His deity:

"I am your God" (*Acts of John* 44)

In the context, it is Jesus who is speaking. Thus, Jesus said, "I am your God:"

"Glory be to thee, Father.
Glory be to thee, Logos.
Glory be to thee, Spirit." (*Acts of John* 94)
"Glory be to thee, Father.
Glory be to thee, Word.
Glory be to thee, Spirit. Amen. (*Acts of John* 51)

This Trinitarian doxology of praise to the triune God is found twice in this work:

"But John stretched out his hands and with uplifted heart said to the Lord, 'Glory be to thee, my Jesus, the only God of truth.'" (*Acts of John* 43)

This passage removes any doubts as to whether the author believed in the full deity of Christ. Not only is Jesus called "the only God of truth," but He is also worshipped as such:

"O God of ages, Jesus Christ, God of truth" (*Acts of John* 82)

"Jesus Christ . . . who is our God" (*Acts of John* 84)

"We thank thee, Lord Jesus Christ . . . that thou alone are [God] now and forever; we . . . give thanks to thee, O Holy One." (*Acts of John* 85)

"Our God Jesus Christ" (*Acts of John* 107)

"Christ Jesus, God, Lord" (*Acts of John* 108)

"O God Jesus" (*Acts of John* 112)

The *Acts of John* reveal that the doctrine of the Trinity formed the context of the worship of the early Church.

"Jesus the Living God" (*Acts of Peter* 2)

"thou God Jesus Christ" (*Acts of Peter* 5)

"And Peter went down by rope and baptized Theon in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

(*Acts of Peter* 5)

"Jesus Christ our God" (*Acts of Peter* 6)

"the brethren kept together with one accord, rejoicing and exulting in the Lord [Jesus], and glorifying the God and Savior of our Lord Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen." (*Acts of Peter* 41:12)

The *Acts of Peter* clearly presupposes the doctrine of the Trinity. The "Jesus Only" cults should also take notice of the Trinitarian formula used in baptism. The Trinitarian baptismal formula also appears in the *Acts of Thomas* 119:

"Praise to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit to all eternity. Amen." (*Pseudo-Clementines* 72:5)

This doxology is directed to the Triune God:

"This is our God now proclaimed in acrostics, Savior, immortal King, who suffered for our sakes." (*Christian Sibyllines* 245-250)

"They shall give to God blows with their unclean hands and with their polluted mouths poisonous spitting. Then shall He expose His back and submit to the whips . . . and He shall wear the crown of thorns . . . Thy king himself shall come, mounted on a gentle colt. Him know thou for thy God, who is God's Son. Glorifying Him and having Him in thy breast, love Him with all thy soul and exalt in His name." (*Christian Sibyllines* 285-290, 325-330)

The *Christian Sibyllines* do not hesitate to call Jesus "God" and to worship Him as true Deity:

“our Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, to whom be the glory and to His gracious Father and to the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.” (*Apocalypse of Paul* 51)

Can words be any plainer? Can the Trinity shine any brighter than in this doxology of worship to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Thus, we must conclude that the evidence found in the New Testament Apocrypha clearly supports the doctrine of the Trinity.

Jesus in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

It will come as a surprise to many that there are references to Jesus in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. There is some difficulty in dating this material because no edition of the Pseudepigrapha gives separate dates for the Christian interpolations in Jewish works. Most of these works come from the second or the third centuries of the Church.

We only have the Christian copies of these books and do not have any access to the original pre-Christian Jewish texts. Even the Dead Sea Scrolls do not furnish us with the complete pre-Christian texts.

The Jewish writings themselves date from around 200 B.C. and the Christian interpolations began in the late first century and continued for several centuries. Yet, the importance of these early references to Jesus cannot be underestimated. In short, they shed light on the belief system of early Palestinian Christianity.

As a side issue, they also have a clear apologetic value in that they provide literary evidence for the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth and what the early Christians believed on many different topics. We acknowledge that these “Jesus” passages are clearly interpolations and should have never been inserted into the Jewish texts. We will only cite those passages that speak directly of the deity of Christ.

“For with your hostile mind you did not perceive your God when He came before mortal eyes. But you crowned Him with a crown from the thorn bush, and you mixed terrible gall for insult and drink. That will cause great afflictions for you. O wood, O most blessed, on which God was stretched out; earth will not contain you, but you will see heaven as home when your fiery eye, O God, flashes like lightning.” (*Sibylline Oracles* 6:1-25)

“The earth will sweat when there will be a sign of judgment. A king will come from heaven who is to judge all flesh and the whole world forever when he comes. Both faithful and

faithless men will see God the Most High with the holy ones at the end of time. He will judge the souls of flesh-bearing men on the tribunal when the whole world becomes barren land and thorns. . . . This is our God, now proclaimed in acrostics, the king, the immortal savior, who suffered for us. . . . Later he will come into the hands of lawless and faithless men, and they will give blows to God with unholy hands and poisonous spittings with polluted mouths. . . . Know that he is your God, as he is the Son of God. Honor him and keep him in your heart and love him from your soul and bear his name. . . . Since he is imperishable he pays no attention to perishable sacrifices, except when intelligent mouths bring forth a hymn. Know who he is, and then you will see the begetter." (*Sibylline Oracles* 8:217-355)

"In the last times He changed the earth and, coming late as a new light, He rose from the womb of the Virgin Mary. Coming from heaven, He put on a mortal form. First, then Gabriel was revealed in his strong and holy person. Second, the archangel also addressed the maiden in speech: "Receive God, Virgin, in your pure bosom." . . . For this is a great wonder to men, but nothing is a great wonder for God the Father and God the Son." (*Sibylline Oracles* 8:455-475)

"Then will come Jesus the Messiah from your descendants out of a virgin named Mary. And God will become incarnate in Him until the completion of a hundred years." (*Testament Of Isaac* 3:18-19)

"Adam said to Seth, his son, "You have heard, my son, that God is going to come into the world after a long time, (he will be) conceived of a virgin and put on a body, be born like a human being, and grow up as a child. He will perform signs and wonders on the earth, will walk on the waves of the sea. He will rebuke the winds and they will be silenced. He will motion to the waves and they will stand still: He will open the eyes of the blind and cleanse the lepers. He will cause the deaf to hear, and the mute to speak. He will straighten the hunchbacked, strengthen the paralyzed, find the lost, drive out evil spirits, and cast out demons." (*Testament Of Adam* 3:1-4)

The early Christians who wrote the statements above clearly believed in the pre-existence and full deity of Jesus Christ. According to them He is God incarnate. It is also clear that the word "God" is used in the absolute

sense of the Most High God of the Old Testament whom the Jews worshipped. Jesus suffered as God for us on the cross.

Conclusion

The literature of the early Church, regardless whether it is from the clergy or the laity, reveals that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were worshipped as the one true living God. Baptism and oaths were done in the name of the Triune God of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The full deity of Christ is clearly asserted with crystal clarity.

Notes

1. William Cunningham, *Historical Theology* (London: Banner, 1969), 2:268.
2. *The Watchtower* 1 August 1992, 21.
3. J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981).
4. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).
5. *Early Christian Fathers*, ed. Cyril C. Richardson (New York: Macmillan, 1970).
6. *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Wilhelm Scheemelcher (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965).
7. The basic texts can be read in several editions:
 - a. The older work is the two volume set by R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* (The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1913). It has been the standard work for many years and we have used it often.
 - b. But we will be using a modern translation in two volumes by James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Doubleday, N.Y., 1983). The only defect is that Charlesworth sometimes inserts his own liberal bias into the texts. But his translation is refreshing.
 - c. A selection of some of the texts can also be found in *The Other Bible*, ed. Willis Barnstone (Harper & Row, 1984). But the introduction is filled with such a great deal of nonsense that it cannot be viewed as scholarship.
8. Lightfoot, Part I, 1:398.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 169.
11. Ibid., Part II, 2:26.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., Part I, 2:140, n. 7.
14. Edmond F. Fortman, *The Triune God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 38.

Part VI

The Defense of the Faith

Chapter Twenty-One

Arianism

A full analysis of the history of Arianism is far beyond the limits of this chapter.¹ The most we can do is to present a brief historical overview of the man Arius, his beliefs, and some of the movements which his theology spawned throughout the history of the Church.

The Man Arius

Arius was a presbyter who lived in Alexandria, Egypt from A.D. 260 to A.D. 336 His preaching was noted for its vivid imagination and philosophic speculation. He showed great promise at first and could have done much to strengthen Christianity in Egypt. But his views of Christ and the Holy Spirit not only fractured the unity of the Church for generations to come, but prepared the way for Islam to conquer Egypt.

He first publicly objected to the orthodox doctrine of Christ in the year 318 while listening to a sermon by Bishop Alexander of Alexandria, in which he stressed the co-eternity of the Father and of the Son. In his letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, Arius tells him what he found objectionable in the sermon.

All this because we do not agree with him when he states in public, "Always God, always Son," "At the same time Father, at the same time Son," "The Son ingenerably co-exists with God," "Ever begotten, ungenerated-created, neither in thought nor in some moment of time does God proceed the Son," "Always God always Son," "The Son is from God himself."²

Bishop Alexander was clearly preaching the orthodox doctrine of the deity of Christ in the context of the Trinity. The eternal pre-existence of Christ with the Father is clearly stated. The Son partakes of the divine nature and attributes of the Father. Words cannot be clearer. Since it was Arius who was objecting to what was being taught in the Church, several things are evident.

First, Arius was *reacting* to orthodoxy. Thus, orthodoxy had to be in existence *before* Arianism. This is confirmed by Alexander's (of Alexandria) letter to Alexander of Thessalonica. In it he complained that

Arius was "attacking the orthodox faith" and "denounced every apostolic doctrine" and "denied the deity of our Savior."

Second, no less than eighteen church councils were held on this issue beginning in 319 and ending with the Council of Constantinople in 381. Due to the constant interference from the Roman Emperors, the theological battle raged back and forth. But in the end, Arius and his followers were excommunicated as heretics by both the Eastern and Western Churches.

How can we explain the violent reaction to Arius? How can we explain what Alexander said in his sermon? Why all the church councils? Why all the fuss? The only adequate explanation is that Arius was attacking the *established* orthodox teaching of the Christian Church.

It is also obvious Alexander did not make up such sophisticated statements dealing the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son on the spur of the moment. As a matter of fact, a literary analysis of what he said reveals that he did not make up the statements. They were parts of various ancient creeds and hymns.

In Bishop Alexander's letter to Alexander of Thessalonica, he complains:

They denounced every pious apostolic doctrine; they organized in a Jewish manner a work group contending against Christ. They deny the divinity of our Savior.³

Alexander points out that the deity of Christ was an "apostolic doctrine" and that Arius' denial was blasphemous. Thus, it is clear that the Church was already worshipping the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is why all the Creeds which followed defended all Three members of the Trinity.

On the other hand, if we assume that no one had ever heard of the Trinity, as modern Arians claim, we are left with no explanation for all the controversy which followed. This observation refutes those who claim that the Trinity doctrine was not invented until the *ninth* century.

Third, while the worship of the Triune God had always been part of Christianity from the very beginning, the Church was now forced to give philosophic and sophisticated answers to Arius' philosophic and sophisticated questions about the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Since these questions were posed in philosophic language borrowed from contemporary Greek philosophy, the Church had to respond using the same language.

In all fairness, we must point out that when the Nicene Fathers borrowed philosophic terms from contemporary culture in order to

respond to the heresy of Arianism, they were not doing something inherently wrong. After all, the words "covenant" in the Old Testament and "Word" (Logos) in the New Testament were borrowed from contemporary culture by the biblical authors. All of us use terms which come from modern as well as ancient philosophy.

The fact that the Church was now forced to use Platonic or Aristotelian terminology does not mean that they were Platonists or Aristotelians. The noted Harvard scholar Prof. Harry Wolfson comments:

On the whole, it is not historically correct to arrange the Fathers into groups, to dress them in the uniform of the Academy or Lyceum or the Porch, to make them march under the banner of Plato or of Aristotle or of the Stoics and sing the songs of those schools. The Fathers did not regard themselves as followers of the various schools of Greek thought. They did not think in terms of contrasts between the different systems within philosophy; they thought only in terms of contrasts between Scripture and philosophy. Within philosophy itself there were to them only right doctrines, which were in agreement with Scripture, and wrong doctrines, which were in disagreement with Scripture, though on certain doctrines they found some philosophers were more often in agreement with Scripture than others.¹

What Arius Taught

Until the last century, the only record of Arius' theology was found in the fragments recorded in the works of Athanasius and other orthodox Fathers who quoted him in order to refute him. Since Arius may have been misquoted or taken out of context, there was some confusion as to what he really believed. But the discovery by Bell, Mai, Turner, Gryson, and others of new manuscripts now allows us access to Arius' own writings.

In the opening lines of the *Thalia*, Arius applied the word γνῶσις (knowledge) to himself. This was a favorite term used by the Gnostics when they wanted to emphasize that they and they alone had "secret knowledge." Perhaps this is why the Gnostic attitude "we have secret knowledge" has always afflicted Arianism.

Arius' God

In his letter to Alexander of Alexandria, Arius states:

"God is thus before all as a Monas and cause."⁵

The term "Monas" (Monas) or Monad is not a biblical term for God. It comes from pagan Greek philosophy, particularly Plato. In *Phaedo* 105C, Plato stated that "the Monas (Monas) is the cause."⁶

Arius clearly adopted the Monas of the Middle Platonists as his God.⁷ In other words, Arius' god was nothing more Plato's Monas! William Rusch comments, "As a result, Arius blurred Christianity and paganism."⁸

According to Plato, the Monas was *indivisible* by nature, i.e., it could not be divided into more than One Person. It had to be indivisible in order to be immutable. This was an idea Plato derived from the pre-Socratic philosopher Parmenides.

After stating that God was the Monas, Arius concluded that Christ could not be eternal because the nature and attributes of the Monas *cannot* be divided into Two Persons. His main objection to Sabellius in his letter to Alexander is that Sabellius *divided* the Monas: "Sabellius, *who divides the Monas*, says, 'Father-and-Son.'"

We shall see in the next chapter that both Arius and Sabellius started from Plato's concept of the indivisibility of the divine Monad as their core belief about God. Although they started with the same premis, they ended up with two contradictory conclusions.

Once again we return to the importance of *a priori* assumptions. Since Arius *presupposed* the indivisibility of the Monas, the Trinity was not even possible. Thus, in his letter to Alexander, Arius argues that, if God is the Monas, then he must exist before the Son:

God is thus before all as a Monas and cause. *Therefore he is also before the Son.*⁹

This is still the underlying principle of Arianism today. On one occasion, we asked a Jehovah's Witness whether he felt that it was even possible for God to be Triune. He replied, "No, it is not possible!"

The attributes of Plato's Monas were *incommunicable*, i.e., they could not be shared with anything or anyone outside of itself. Thus, the idea that Christ could share in the attributes of the Monas such as deity, perfection, eternity, immutability, omniscience, etc., was totally unacceptable to Arius. As Hagerty points out, "According to Arius, God cannot communicate his substance; therefore, the Logos, who is produced, cannot be God."¹⁰ Fortman comments:

For Arius there is only one God. He alone is unbegotten, eternal, without beginning, truly God. He cannot communicate His being or substance since this would imply that He is divisible and mutable. If anything else is to exist, it must come into existence not by any communication of God's being but by an act of creation that produces it out of nothing.¹¹

Obviously, Arius' Platonic idea of God (the Monas) affected his interpretation of Scripture. This has been ably demonstrated by Helyer.¹²

Arius' Christ

In the Thalia, Arius referred to Christ as the "Duas" (Duas) or Dynad which was another Platonic term. Since the "Duas" (Christ) could not share the same attributes as the Monas, the "Duas" (Christ) could not be eternal, immutable, etc. This is why he objected when Alexander said that both the Father and the Son were eternal. It was a philosophic term which implied inferiority and imperfection.

In Platonism, the Duas or Dynad was a demigod, i.e., he was not God nor was he like other creatures. He was a third kind of being. Thus, he was a demigod. As Rusch points out, "For Arius, Jesus is a demigod, neither fully God nor fully man."¹³ Fortman agrees:

God resolved to create the world, and so He created first a superior being, which we call the Son or Word, destined to be the instrument of creation. The Son occupies a place intermediate between God and the world, for he is neither God nor part of the world-system. He is before all creatures and the instrument of their creation.¹⁴

In its article on Arianism, *The Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* states that according to Arius:

... the Father is purely one, *monas*, the Logos is many-in-one, the realm of ideas. If the *monas* is to be wholly itself, indivisible and self-sufficient, it must be capable of subsisting without the Logos.¹⁵

Arianism is based on the pagan Greek philosophic principle that the being and attributes of the Monas (God) are *incommunicable*. This means that Jesus (the Duas) *cannot* partake of the nature or attributes of

the Monas. Instead, Arius remolds Jesus into the image of Plato's Demiurge. Hagerty comments:

Arius taught that the Logos is a demiurge who produces out of nothing all other creatures, including the Holy Ghost. This phase of Arianism received scant attention until the controversy over the divinity of Christ subsided.¹⁶

In the *Timaeus*, Plato had proposed the existence of a unique creature called the Demiurge as the Creator of all else mediated between God and the world. The Demiurge was finite in attributes, but was more powerful than any other creature. He created a host of smaller demigods to do his will.¹⁷

Arius' Christ was actually a "Christian" version of Plato's Demiurge. The Arian "Jesus" has finite attributes and mediates between the universe and God. He created the angels to do his will.

A Summary of Arius' Beliefs

1. In the classic Platonic sense, God is the eternal, immutable, and indivisible Monas. He is not the Father from all eternity because there was a time when He did not have a son.

Trinitarians do believe that God is indivisible in *Being* because you cannot take a knife and cut God into pieces. But at the same time, they see no conflict with saying that God is One indivisible Being in *Three Persons*. But Arius assumed that God is indivisible in *Person*. Thus, his concept of "indivisibility" is different from the classic orthodox concept.

2. Jesus Christ is called the Duas who was created by the Monas. This is why He is the demiurge-like creator and the mediator between Mind (God) and matter (the world). He was created by the Monas and thus there was a time when he was not.
3. Since the Monas is indivisible, the Son and the Spirit cannot partake of his nature or attributes. Thus, the Trinity cannot be true by definition.
4. The Holy Spirit was created by the Duas and is not God. This was later abandoned by most Arians and today they reduced the Spirit to a non-personal force.

The Origins of Arius' Ideas

Many Arians today naively assume that Arius discovered his ideas of God and Christ in the Bible. When they are confronted by the fact that his views came from pagan Greek philosophy, they sometimes respond by saying that it is irrelevant where he got his ideas because modern Arianism is rooted in the Bible alone.

The early Church Fathers had no problem seeing the influence of Greek philosophy in Arius' ideas of God and Christ. Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Socretes Scholasticus, and Epiphanius all pointed this out in their own day. Arius even believed in the Platonic doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul.

Today it is recognized that there are many different philosophic strains present in Arius' writings. Evidently, he was quite eclectic in his philosophic views. The following is a list of some of the sources of the ideas of Arius on God and Christ:

1. *Theological Sources*: Origin, Lucian of Antioch, Paul of Samosata, Methodius of Olympia, Sabellius
2. *Philosophical Sources*: Gnosticism, Philo, Plato, Aristotle, Stoicism, Atticus, Plotinus, Basilides, Middle Platonism

Evidently, Arius was epistemologically unaware of where he got his ideas. Like a dog picks up fleas, he picked up ideas everywhere. As pointed out by Harnack, Gwatkin, Loofs, Prestige, Stead, and many other scholars, Arianism is more pagan than Christian and more philosophical than exegetical.

The Nature of the Controversy

The Arian Controversy was not only complex, but multidimensional. No single explanation is sufficient to describe all the elements of it. Having studied most of the literature on the subject, we have concluded that there are at least eight elements that must be taken into consideration:

1. *Philosophical*: The struggle between Platonism, Aristotelianism, Gnosticism, and Stoicism which was taking place in society at large was now slipping into the Church. As we saw, Arius was clearly influenced in his thinking by these pagan philosophies. Instead of the Bible dictating his philosophy, his philosophy dictated his theology.

2. *Hermeneutical*: The hermeneutic principles used by Arius and Athanasius were not the same. This is why they came up with different interpretations of the same verses. Kannengiesser dogmatically states, "The crisis is essentially one of hermeneutics."¹⁸
3. *Epistemological*: While Arius appealed to reason, Athanasius appealed to Scripture. Thus, the hermeneutical issue was Rationalism versus the authority of Scripture.
4. *Political*: The interference of the Emperor Constantine and several Emperors after him unnecessarily politicized Church affairs. Once these "peace at any price" politicians got involved, the results were disastrous. Spies, political intrigue, assassination attempts, murder, exile, riots, fixed verdicts, etc., often took the main stage. Jehovah's Witnesses sometimes pretend that the entire controversy was political.
5. *Ecclesiastical*: The conflict often came down to the cultural and theological differences between the Eastern Church and the Western Church. These differences ultimately led to the Great Schism between Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism in 1054 A.D.
6. *Theological*: Subordinationism and Trinitarianism are ultimately irreconcilable. These conflicting ways of understanding the relationship between the Three had to come to a parting of the way eventually.
7. *Dialectical*: Modalism arose as a reaction to primitive Trinitarianism. Then Arianism arose as a reaction to Modalism.
8. *Linguistical*: A large part of the controversy was actually semantic in nature due to the failure of the Greek Fathers of the Eastern Church and the Latin Fathers of the Western Church to understand each other's languages. The Latin Fathers often misunderstood and then mistranslated the meaning of the Greek terms found in the Eastern Creeds.

Each of the above elements had a role to play in the Arian Controversy. Some were more important at one time, and then not so important at other times. Those who are guilty of the fallacy of reductionism will choose one of the elements above and pretend that it alone caused the Controversy. Such a position only reveals intellectual poverty and a biased approach to the subject.

Arianism and Apollinarianism

Wolfson rightly pointed out that Arianism is most easily understood when you contrast it to the other early heresies. In his work, *Arianism and Apollinarianism*, he states:

Arianism and Apollinarianism are two contrasting heresies of the fourth century. Arianism may be described as a leftist heresy: it denied the divinity of the pre-existent Christ, the Logos; it also denied a divine nature to the born Christ, Jesus. Apollinarianism may be called a rightist heresy: it denied a human nature in the born Christ.¹⁹

Wolfson is right on target. Arianism and Apollinarianism are the two extreme ends of the theological pendulum. The one denies what the other affirms.

Modalism and Arianism

The relationship between Arianism and Modalism should not be overlooked. Whereas Modalists accept the deity of the Son, but reject His personhood, Arians accept His personhood, but reject His deity! Whereas Arians reject the deity of the Spirit, Modalists accept it. They too take the extreme opposite positions on many issues.

Reactionary Theology

Both Modalism and Arianism are *reactionary* theologies, i.e., they arose in response to the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. They both attempted to solve the Trinitarian riddle: How can God be Three and One at the same time? But in their attempt, they fell into the classic Greek philosophic problem of the One and the Many.

Modalism emphasized the One to the exclusion of Three, while Arianism emphasized the Three to the exclusion of the One. The Modalists denied that the Three were separate Persons, but affirmed they were one God, while the first Arians denied the Three were One God, but affirmed they were separate persons. Early Arianism believed that the Holy Spirit was a creature just like the Son.

This is why Arianism has always had a problem with polytheism, i.e., the belief in more than one God. For example, while the Jehovah's Witnesses deny that Jesus is to be worshipped as God, yet they have no difficulty giving "relative worship" to Jesus as "a god".²⁰ If they were true

monotheists, then they would have never rendered John 1:1 as "the Word was a god."

The truth is that Sabellianism arose in reaction to Trinitarianism, and Arianism arose in reaction to Sabellianism. It was not mere happenstance that the controversy started when Arius accused Bishop Alexander of Sabellianism.²¹

The Modern Meaning of Arianism

Today, the word "Arianism" is an all embracing term denoting any and all anti-Trinitarian theological systems which deny the deity of Christ and the personhood and deity of the Holy Spirit. While this definition does not fit all the various stages and phases of the long history of Arianism, it is generally true today. It encompasses the entire religious spectrum from modern Liberalism to Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Reformation Period

Who would have ever thought that the ancient heresy of Arianism would be revived in modern times by the pantheistic astrologer Michael Servetus, who was burned as a heretic in Geneva in 1553.²²

Laelius Socinus (1525-1562) was present in Geneva when Servetus met his doom. But he went ahead and embraced the anti-Trinitarian fervor of Servetus and passed it on to his nephew Faustus Socinus (1539-1604) whose followers would be called the Socinians.

The Socinians gained popularity, first among Eastern Europeans, especially in Poland, and then among the Dutch and the English. Their denial of the Trinity and in particular the deity of Christ was the biggest scandal of the day.²³

During the seventeenth century, Socinianism was renamed "Unitarianism" in the English world and in 1687, John Nye's book *History of Unitarianism Commonly called Socinianism* created a great controversy in the English Church.²⁴

Modern Unitarianism lost its faith in any kind of God and joined with the Universalists in the 1960's. Today, one can be an atheist or a witch and become a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

The demise of classic Unitarianism does not mean the demise of Arianism. Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians, the Way, Assemblies of Yahweh, and a dozen other Arian cults still spend a large proportion of their time, energy, and money attacking the doctrine of the Trinity.

There are also some modern liberals who deny the Trinity and the deity of Christ due to their uncritical adoption of the Werde-Bousset thesis.

John Hick's book *The Myth of God Incarnate* is an example of this form of liberal Arianism.

With this brief overview of the nature, origins, and history of Arianism, we will now turn to an analysis of the basic anti-Trinitarian arguments used by most Arians down through the ages.

Basic Arian Arguments

After spending over thirty years studying such Arian cults as the Jehovah's Witnesses, The Way International, etc., it is obvious that most of them have never studied logic, philosophy, Hebrew, Greek, hermeneutics, history, or linguistics. Most of their arguments are erroneous on the simple basis of logic. A brief summary of the more glaring fallacies is as follows:

1. *Circular Reasoning*: If you begin with the assumption that the Trinity is not true, and then proceed to conclude that the Trinity is not true, you have assumed in your premise what you are attempting to prove in your conclusion.

For example, when we point to a passage in the Apostolic Fathers where the the Trinity doctrine is clearly in view, some Arians will respond, "That is not possible because the Trinity was not invented until many centuries later." They, thus, ignore the evidence by arguing in a circle:

Since the early Church did not believe in the Trinity, then there cannot be any references to the Trinity in the early Church.

Since there are no references to the Trinity in the early Church, therefore the early Church did not believe in the Trinity.

Another example of circular reasoning is:

Since the New Testament never calls Jesus "God," then there cannot be any verses where he is called "God."

Since there are no verses which call Jesus "God," then the New Testament never calls Jesus "God."

Circular reasoning is invalid regardless of who is doing it.

2. *Undistributed Middle Term*: If you argue that if A implies B and B implies C, then A implies C, you are giving a valid argument. But if you argue A implies B and C implies D, then A implies D, your argument is invalid because the middle term B is not distributed in both the first and second premises. This is the root fallacy underlying all the pagan source arguments. You cannot jump from the pagan sources over to the Bible because there is no middle term to link the two together.

3. *Categorical Fallacies*: Whenever you hear such questions as:

“If Jesus was God, who ran the universe the three days he was dead?”

“If God cannot be tempted, why was Jesus tempted?”

“If Jesus was God, then to whom did he pray?”

“Since Jesus did not know when he was coming back, how can he be God?”

“How can Jesus have faith in God if he was God?”

“Why would Jesus call the Father God if he himself was God?”

“If Jesus was God, how could he die?”

Such questions arise only if you fail to distinguish between the categories of the economical and ontological Trinity, the two natures of Christ, and the three persons in the Trinity. They are called “nonsense questions” in logic.

4. *Arguments from silence*: When Arians challenge Trinitarians to show them where the word “Trinity” is found in the Bible, where Jesus said, “I am God” in the New Testament, etc., they are arguing from silence.

5. *Straw man argument*: Why do Arians keep defining the Trinity as “three gods”? Because it is easy to knock down such a straw man. Why do they give the following argument on John 1:1? Someone who is with another person cannot also be that other person.²⁵

Do Trinitarians maintain that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are *one person*? No. Do Trinitarians interpret John 1:1 to mean that Jesus and the Father are *one person*? No. Then why does the Watchtower waste everyone’s time by proving that there is only one God and refuting the

idea that two persons can be one person? Because it is easier to refute a straw man of your own creation than to deal honestly with Trinitarian arguments.

6. *Arguments from ignorance*: It is sheer ignorance to use pre-archeological and pre-Dead Sea Scroll nineteenth century arguments against the Trinity. For example, the claim is still made that the early Jews did not use "Lord" (κύριος) as a title for God.

7. *Arguments of false cause*: Claiming that the Trinity doctrine was derived from pagan sources, from the Emperor Constantine, etc.

8. *Appeal To Misery*: Some Arians appeal to the misery and suffering they have endured over the centuries at the hands of Trinitarians as proof that the doctrine of the Trinity is false.

9. *Ad Hominem Arguments*: Arians often malign the character and motives of Trinitarian theologians by calling them crooks, thieves, racketeers, devilish, etc. This is malicious as well as invalid.

10. *Hidden assumptions*: For example, let us examine the question, "If Jesus was God, who ran the universe the three days he was dead?"

First, the person who asks this question *assumes* that the Trinity doctrine teaches that Jesus is the entire Godhead. But what Trinitarian would say this?

Second, he *assumes* that death means extinction or annihilation. This is the false doctrine of "soul sleep."

Third, he *assumes* that, if Jesus was non-existent for three days, then the entire Godhead was non-existent for three days. And, if God did not exist for three days, who ran the universe while he was non-existent?

Since the hidden assumptions are erroneous, is it any wonder that the conclusions are false as well?

11. *Self-contradictory Arguments*: When the Watchtower Society describes the Arian Controversy at the beginning of the third century, sometimes it states that Arius was reacting to an already established Trinity doctrine. They even describe the Trinitarian Bishops running from the church with their fingers in their ears when they heard the blasphemous ideas of Arius. They define the Nicene Creed and the others creeds which followed as "Trinitarian." Athanasius represented the majority view.²⁶

But in another place, they claim that the Trinity doctrine was not invented until the ninth century and, thus, there were no Trinitarians in the third century. The Nicene Creed and even the Athanasian Creed were not Trinitarian.²⁷ Athanasius represented a minority view. Evidently, they can contradict themselves without the least embarrassment.

Another example of convoluted reasoning is the Watchtower's argument that since the word "Trinity" does not appear in the Bible, therefore, the doctrine is not in the Bible. But then they turn around and claim that Plato taught the Trinity, even though the word "trinity" does not appear in Plato's writings. If we were to follow their convoluted reasoning, then Plato did not teach the Trinity either.

12. Out of Date Arguments: The Unitarians during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries produced the most scholarly attacks on the doctrine of the Trinity in the history of the Arianism. Modern anti-Trinitarians for the most part still heavily rely on these arguments because it is assumed that they are still valid.²⁸

But the rise of the sciences of archeology and critical analysis has invalidated most of these old arguments. The only ones still using them are those Arians who still depend on nineteenth century Unitarianism.

Having pointed out the basic kinds of logical fallacies which underlie most Arian arguments, we will now deal with those arguments which are still being used by such Arian cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Objection #1 *The doctrine of the Trinity cannot be true because no one can fully comprehend or explain it.*

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (i.e., Jehovah's Witnesses) is the largest and most aggressive Arian cult in modern times. In its booklet *Should You Believe In The Trinity?* The Society argues that the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be a true because it is "beyond the grasp of human reason."²⁹ They go on to ask:

... would God be responsible for a doctrine about himself that is so confusing that even Hebrew, Greek, and Latin scholars cannot really explain it?³⁰

They conclude the Trinity cannot be true because it ends in mystery. But when we turn to their main reference work, *Aid To Bible Understanding*, we find that they admit that they believe in many such things as the infinite nature of Jehovah even though:

The human mind . . . cannot actually comprehend the infinity of Jehovah's existence.³¹

We are at once confronted with a double standard. If it is true that incomprehensibility refutes the Trinity, then it should also equally refute "the infinity of Jehovah's existence." The attempt of the Jehovah's Witnesses to have their cake and eat it too, dooms their argument. (For the proof that the incomprehensibility of God is a biblical doctrine found in both the Old and New Testaments, see chapter 6.)

Objection #2 *Why should God be Three instead of One? How can God be One and Three at the same time?*

Trinitarians readily admit that the Trinity is beyond our finite capacity to understand or explain Him in an exhaustive sense. There is simply nothing in this world which is one and three at the same time, *in the same sense* in which God is One and Three. The Trinity is incomprehensible.

Modern cultists and liberal theologians join hands at this point and declare that, if no one can fully understand or explain the Trinity, then it is nonsense at its worst and error at its best. They may have different reasons for saying this, but they are united on this point.

Trinitarians admit that they do not have all the answers. But neither does anyone else. When anti-Trinitarians ask, "Why should God be Three Persons instead of One Person?" Trinitarians can just as easily ask, "Well, why should God be One Person instead of Three Persons?" The sword cuts both ways.

Obviously, no one can explain WHY or HOW God is what He is. He existed long before we were around and He is what He is regardless whether we can fully understand or explain Him.

Obviously, any god which man could fully understand and explain would be less than what man is. Such a god would not be worthy of our worship, awe or praise. The inescapable truth is that God will always be greater than our finite capacity to understand or explain Him.

Our failure to understand or explain fully the Trinity or any other aspect of God is not due to some defect in God or in His revelation. The "defect," if it can be called that, is nothing more or less than the reality of our own finiteness.

Objection #3 *The Trinity is irrational. It is not in accord with human Reason.*

When Arians bitterly complain that the Trinity cannot be true because it is not “rational,” i.e., it cannot be fully explained to their satisfaction, they are using the same old tired arguments developed by the Socinians in the 16th and 17th centuries. The vaunted rationalism of that age may be long gone but its anti-Trinitarian arguments remain.

II. Historical Arguments

Objection #4 *The word “Trinity” does not appear in the early Church. Thus, they did not believe in the Trinity.*

Since this is an argument from silence, it is logically invalid. All you can prove from silence is silence. But since this is a favorite argument of Jehovah’s Witnesses, it is important to point out that the word “Jehovah” first appeared in Europe in the late Middle Ages as an erroneous translation of YHWH.³²

If we are to date the doctrine of the Trinity according to when the word “Trinity” first appeared, as the Jehovah’s Witnesses claim, then we must date the appearance of Jehovah to the Middle Ages! The Arians are clearly guilty of committing the logical fallacy of dating an idea by its final terminology.

Objection #5 *Since the Nicene Creed does not state that the Holy Spirit is a person or God, then it is clear that the early Church did not believe that the Holy Spirit was a person or God.*

Once again, this is an argument from silence. To claim that the early Church did not believe in the deity or personhood of the Holy Spirit because it was not dealt with at that time is illogical.

We must also point out that after stating that they believed in the Father and in the Son, the Nicene Fathers went on to say, “We believe in the Holy Spirit.” Obviously, the Holy Spirit was affirmed as part of the core beliefs of Christianity.

Since the issue which caused the Nicene Council to convene was Arius’ denial of the deity of Christ, they did not deal with the issue of the Holy Spirit. But as soon as that issue was resolved, they did in fact convene the Council of Constantinople which reaffirmed that the Church had always worshipped the Holy Spirit as the third Person in the Holy Trinity:

In the initial stages of the Arian controversy, up to about the middle of the fourth century, the status of the Holy Spirit was not a central issue; the creed approved by the Council of

Nicaea in 325 powerfully emphasized the consubstantiability of the Son with the Father but concluded with the simple, traditional affirmation, "And we believe in the Holy Spirit." By the time that the Council of Constantinople terminated the controversy in 381 and promulgated what is today known as the Nicene Creed, the third article had been considerably expanded to read, *inter alia*, "And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Life Giver, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets." These formulations, although not explicitly calling the Spirit "God" or "co-substantial" with the Father and the Son, are nevertheless clear enough in their intention. The Spirit is "Lord" (a divine title) and "life Giver" (i.e., creator), comes forth "from the Father" (as does the Son), is worshipped "with the Father and the Son," and is the same Spirit in the Old Testament ("who spoke by the prophets") as in the New.³³

Objection #6 *The New Testament concepts of God and Christ have been historically traced back to pre-Christian pagan religions and philosophies such as Gnosticism. The concepts of a "virgin birth," "the redeemer-myth," and a "dying and rising Savior" are all found in many pre-Christian pagan religions such as the Iranian savior myth. Paul's Christ was only an imitation of Adonis, Isis, Zeus, etc.*

This is a version of the Werde-Bousset thesis *via* Bultmann. It is still standard fare in most liberal seminaries and state universities. Several comments are in order.

First, as Machen, Kim, Yamauchi, Ridderbos, and many other scholars have pointed out, when you ask those who make this claim to give you some clear *pre-Christian* primary source materials, they don't produce any. They will quote *modern* writers such as Bultmann, but they do not provide any primary documentation from *pre-Christian* sources.³⁴

For example, Bultmann claimed that the pre-Christian Gnostics had a "redeemer-myth" concept that influenced the New Testament's concept of the person and work of Jesus. Yet, he did not produce any pre-Christian materials to back up his claim. Even his devoted disciple, Schweitzer had to admit:

I even think that, as far as the redeemer-myth (and not merely the gnostic atmosphere) is concerned, cross-fertilization started by and large only in the period *after* the New

Testament and that the New Testament has scarcely been influenced by it.³⁵

The idea of a pre-Christian "redeemer-myth" is itself a myth. As Hengle states:

In reality there is no gnostic redeemer myth in the sources which can be demonstrated chronologically to be pre-Christian.³⁶

The same holds true for all the "virgin births," "savior-myths" and "crucified saviors" which supposedly predate the New Testament. For example, the Iranian "redeemer-myth" has been exposed as a fraud. Quispel comments:

Everyone now agrees that R. Reitzenstein, when reconstructing the Iranian mystery of salvation, made a mistake when he took Manichean for Iranian fragments and thus antedated the concept of the Saved Savior by a millennium. In other words: this Iranian mystery of salvation was a hoax.³⁷

Since we have already demonstrated that the New Testament is thoroughly *Jewish* in its concepts of God and the Messiah, we will not deal with the idea any further.

Not Enough Time

The fatal problem with all the pagan source arguments is that they require extremely late dates for the New Testament. Why? A sufficient amount of time had to transpire in order for people to forget what Jesus and the apostles really taught. This means that the New Testament could not be written while people who were eyewitnesses to Jesus or the apostles were still alive. If they were still alive, they would have protested the injection of pagan ideas into the New Testament.

The Unitarians in the nineteenth century understood that they were entirely dependent upon very late dates for the New Testament, particularly the Pauline Epistles. They realized that if the New Testament was written *before* 70 A.D., when the eyewitnesses were still alive, then the idea that some theologian could get away with contradicting what Christ or the apostles taught, is absurd. Using circular reasoning, they had to give extremely late dates for the New Testament in order to give enough time for all the eyewitnesses to Christ and the apostles to die.

As early as 1907, John Illingworth points out this error:

Parallelism in different religions are too readily assumed to be causally connected. Thus the Christian Trinity is said to be borrowed from earlier sources. But the critical re-establishment of the early date of the New Testament leaves no room for this and the Patristic tradition attributed the doctrine of Christ to Himself.³⁸

. . . the doctrine of the Trinity is sometimes explained away by a similar misuse of the comparative method. . . . The possibility of such a supposition was further facilitated by assigning an extravagantly late date to all the writings in the New Testament. . . But it is now a familiar fact that this radical attempt upon the dates of the documents in question has been abandoned, by all critics who are worthy of the name.³⁹

Yamauchi points out that late dates are assigned to the New Testament by those who desperately need sufficient time for paganism to creep into the Church without anyone noticing:

It is not altogether coincidental that scholars who assume a Gnostic background for New Testament documents in some cases also adopt very late dates for these books, because late dates for these documents would make a stronger case for affinities with Gnosticism. Thus Ruldoph dates Colossians to 80 A.D., Ephesians to the end of the first century, and both the Pastoral and the Johannine Epistles at the beginning of the second century. Koester dates the Pastorals to as late as between 120 and 160 A.D.⁴⁰

The internal evidence that the New Testament *in its entirety* was written before 70 A.D., has been irrefutably demonstrated by the well-known liberal theologian, John A. T. Robinson.⁴¹ The external evidence found in Cave Seven of the Dead Sea Scrolls has confirmed that the New Testament was written *before* 70 A.D.⁴² Thus, the pagan source theory is patently absurd.

Objection #7 *The Christian Church derived its doctrine of the Trinity from pagan religions and from Greek philosophy, particularly Plato.*

This is the same argument as above, but this time applied to the early Church instead of the Bible. While liberals use both arguments, Arian

fundamentalistic cults such as the Watchtower Society will avoid the idea that the Bible was corrupted by pagan religions. Instead, they make the claim:

Many centuries before the time of Christ, there were triads or trinities, of gods in ancient Babylon and Assyria.⁴⁴ Throughout the ancient world, as far back as Babylon, the worship of pagan gods grouped in threes, or triads, was common. That influence was also prevalent in Egypt, Greece, and Rome in the centuries before, during, and after Christ. After the death of the apostles, such pagan ideas began to invade Christianity.⁴⁵

The Watchtower then “proves” their claim by pictures of three idols of various pagan deities standing together as if they represent the source of the Christian concept of the Trinity. For example, they point to Egyptian idols of Osiris, Isis, and Horus.⁴⁶

This argument is based on two very basic logical fallacies. First, it commits the fallacy of equivocation in that the word “Trinity” is being used with several different meanings. The word “Trinity” according to Christian theology refers to one, infinite/personal God eternally existing in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But the word “Trinity” is used by the Arians to refer to any grouping of three finite gods and goddesses. Obviously, there is no logical relationship between three finite gods and the one triune God of Christianity.

Second, the fallacy of equivocation leads to the categorical fallacy of trying to relate together concepts which have no relationship at all. The following diagram illustrates the radical difference between the Trinity and pagan triads:

THE TRINITY

one God
infinite in nature
infinite in attributes
omnipotent
omniscient
omnipresent
immutable
perfect
good

PAGAN TRIADS

three gods & goddesses
finite in nature
finite attributes
impotent
ignorant of some things
limited to one place
mutable
imperfect
good and evil

The Watchtower's attempt to link the Trinity to pagan triads reveals either that they do not understand the Trinity, or that, if they do, they are being deliberately deceptive.

The same problem arises when they claim the doctrine of the Trinity came from Plato.⁴⁶ They do not indicate where the Trinity can be found in the writings of Plato. They quote from Unitarians and other anti-Trinitarians who make the same claim, but nowhere do they quote Plato.

Since we are quite familiar with Plato and have translated some of his dialogues from the original Greek, we must go on record that we have never found in Plato anything even remotely resembling the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Perhaps this is why Arians never give a single reference in Plato's works to back up their claims.

Furthermore, we can use one of the Arian arguments against the Trinity against Arianism itself. Does the word "Trinity" ever appear in the writings of Plato? No. Does it appear in Aristotle? No. Does it appear in any pre-Christian pagan writings? No.

Since the Arians claim that the absence of the word "Trinity" in the Bible means that the concept is not present, then they must admit that since the word "Trinity" does not appear in Greek philosophy or in ancient pagan religions, the concept is not present either.

If the Arian responds that while the word "Trinity" may not be found in Plato, etc., the concept is there, then the Trinitarians have just as much a right to argue that the concept of the Trinity is in the Bible, even though the word "Trinity" is not found there.

Objection #8 *The early Christians took Plato's concept of the Demiurge and turned it into their concept of Christ.*

In 1976, the Watchtower published an article entitled "How Christendom Borrowed from Plato".⁴⁷ In it they claimed that the "early Christians" borrowed their concept of the Trinity from Platonism and used Plato's Demiurge as their concept of Christ. They have made this claim many times.

What they fail to tell their readers is that Plato's Demiurge was a finite being created by God and, thus, not equal to God. The following diagram reveals whose Christ is patterned after the Demiurge.

The Demiurge		Two Views of Christ	
Platonism	created	Arianism	Trinitarianism
finite	not eternal	created	not created
		finite	infinite
		not eternal	eternal

not omnipresent	not omnipresent	omnipresent
not omniscient	not omniscient	omniscient
not omnipotent	not omnipotent	omnipotent
semi-divine	semi-divine	full deity

From the above chart, it is clear that it is Arianism that has patterned its view of Christ from Plato's Demiurge.

The Watchtower and Greek Philosophy

The Watchtower has argued that the Trinity doctrine is wrong because "There is but one First Cause."⁴⁸ This argument deserves several comments.

First, the title of the article from which we just quoted is, "The Three Gods of Religious Racketeers." It is clear that the Watchtower deliberately misrepresents the doctrine of the Trinity as belief in *three gods*. To add insult to injury, it also uses the ugly *ad hominem* argument that all Christian clergymen are "racketeers" i.e., thieves.

Second, *The Watchtower* magazine uses the phrase "First Cause" as a title for their God on many occasions. See *The Watchtower* 10/1/59 p.586; 10/15/61 p.614; 1/1/65 p.14; 9/1/70 p.537; 5/15/71 p.304; 1/15/71 p.52; 5/1/79 p.6; 2/15/81 p.5; 10/1/82 p.4; 6/15/93 p.13, etc.

In a debate, one of the best ways to refute the other side is to use their own arguments against them. In desperation, they will often declare their own arguments invalid! In effect, you get them to refute themselves. Let us apply the same arguments they used against the word "Trinity" to the words "First Cause."

Are the words "First Cause" found in the Old Testament? No. Are they found in the New Testament? No. Are they found in the early creeds of the Church such as the Apostle's Creed or the Nicene Creed? No.

If the Jehovah's Witnesses applied to the words "First Cause" the same argument that they use concerning the word "Trinity," then they would have to conclude that the concept of God as the "First Cause" is not a biblical doctrine.

Where then did the words "First Cause" originate? If we turn to Plato in the *Timeaus* 455a-b; 465d-466a or the *Statesman* 587a-589c or to Aristotle in *Physics* BK VII, chronicles 1-2, 326a-329a; VIII, 334a-355d, we find the pagan Greek philosophers were the ones who invented the phrase "First Cause" to indicate that there can be only one final and ultimate cause for all things and this First Cause of causes must be divine. Aristotle's argument for the existence of the Unmoved Mover depends entirely on the concept of an ultimate "First Cause."⁴⁹

If we were to follow the Watchtower's convoluted reasoning, we would conclude that the Jehovah's Witnesses derived their idea of God as the "First Cause" from pagan Greek philosophy!

Sauce for the Gander and for the Goose

The Watchtower could argue that the concept of God as the "First Cause" is found in Genesis 1:1, long before there were any Greek philosophers. Thus the use of the phrase has nothing to do with the origin of the concept. They were simply using the common philosophical language of today.

If they can do this, then so can the Trinitarians. The use of philosophic terms by the Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers in their definitions of the Trinity are not to be faulted either. They were simply using the common philosophical terms of their day.

Faulty Assumptions

How were the Arians able to turn the concept of God as the "First Cause" into an argument against the Trinity? By assuming that the Trinity means *three* gods, they concluded that the Trinity would also mean *three* First Causes! Since you cannot have three "Firsts," they felt they could use it against the belief in *three* gods. But, the truth is the Trinity doctrine is a statement about *one* God, and has nothing to do with three gods.

Just one added note. When Trinitarians show that Christ is called "the First and the Last" (Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 22:13) and then link it to Yahweh being "the First and the Last" (Isa. 41:4), the Jehovah Witnesses usually respond by saying that *there can be more than one "First and Last."* It would seem that they are attempting to both deny and affirm that there can be only one "First."

III. Biblical Arguments

The hermeneutical issues raised by Arian interpretations of biblical texts is a vast subject. Today, most Arians depend on a cultic hermeneutic in which the founder or leader is inspired by God to give a "special" and "hidden" meaning of biblical passages. Since this interpretation is supernaturally guided, there is no need to examine the original text or to observe the grammar, the literary context or the historical context of a verse.

The issue, thus, comes down to religious authority instead of exegesis. As long as the cultist believes that his leaders are inspired by God and

thus rendered infallible in their interpretation of Scripture, there is not much a Trinitarian can say to change that interpretation. A grammatical, historical, exegetical approach to the Bible cannot compete with the vaunted claims of divine enlightenment and special revelation.

There are ten basic errors which appear in fundamentalistic Arian interpretations of Scripture:

1. Taking a verse out of context.
2. Misapplying texts.
3. Ignoring the grammar of the original text.
4. Reading their own ideas back into the text.
5. Deliberately mistranslating a verse.
6. Quoting only a part of a commentator and twisting his words to make him say the exact opposite of what he said in the context.
7. Inventing Hebrew and Greek grammatical terms and tenses.
8. Quoting a part of a verse in such a way as to misrepresent what it is saying.
9. Producing a false translation of the entire Bible.
10. Depending almost entirely upon defunct nineteenth century Unitarian arguments.

That Arians such as the Jehovah's Witnesses are guilty of committing such gross errors in their interpretation of Scripture has been well documented by many times by Walter Martin, Ed Gruss, Bruce Metzger, and many others.⁵⁰ Thus, we need only give several illustrations which show that the erroneous nature of the Arian hermeneutic.

Sample Texts

The Watchtower Society has written a small booklet entitled *Should You Believe In The Trinity?* In which they summarize all of their arguments against the Trinity.⁵¹ The reason we mention this specific booklet is that it contains all the logical, historical, philosophical, and exegetical fallacies we have so far pointed out. Most of the booklet deals with non-biblical arguments such as church history. But when it came to a positive representation of their "biblical" arguments against the Trinity, they put forth only four texts. We will deal with these texts using them as illustrations of the erroneous nature of the Arian hermeneutic.

Proverbs 8:22

[Yahweh] possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old.

יְהוָה קָנָנִי רִאשִׁית דְּרָכָיו קָדָם מִפְּעֻלָּיו מֵאֵז:

The Arian interpretation is as follows:

In the context "wisdom" is speaking (Prov. 8:1). The word "wisdom" is a name or title for Jesus, according to I Corinthians 1:30. Speaking as "wisdom," Jesus stated in verse 22, "Yahweh *created* me at the beginning." Thus, "wisdom" in Proverbs 8 is "his first creation, the master craftsman, the prehuman Jesus." Since Jesus states that he was created by God, then he cannot be God.

Analysis

1. The concept of "wisdom" in Proverbs 8:1 must be interpreted in the broader context of the genre of Jewish Wisdom literature (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes).
2. The word "wisdom" in Proverbs 8:1,11,12 is חֵכְמָה. Out of seventy-seven occurrences in the Old Testament, it appears fifty-four times in the Wisdom Literature (Job: 13 times, Prov.: 29 times and Eccles.: 12 times).
3. "Wisdom" can refer to man's wisdom (Job 4:21) or to God's wisdom (Job 12:13).
4. Divine wisdom is found in the fear of the Lord (Prov.: 9:10). It enables a man to live a good and happy life by giving him the divine perspective on life's issues and trials.
5. Wisdom was at times personified in Scripture and in such extra-biblical literature as the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, and Baruch. In the book of Proverbs, divine wisdom is pictured as a woman who warns and counsels mankind to avoid sin (Prov. 1:20). Thus, its gender is feminine:

Wisdom shouts in the street, **She** lifts her voice in the square; At the head of the noisy streets **she** cries out; At the entrance of the gates in the city, **she** utters **her** sayings: (Prov. 1:20-21) Does not wisdom call, And understanding lift up **her** voice?

On top of the heights beside the way, Where the paths meet, **she** takes her stand; Beside the gates, at the opening to the city, At the entrance of the doors, **she** cries out: (Prov. 8:1-3)

6. In order to escape the feminine nature of the personification of wisdom in Proverbs, the Watchtower Society in its New World Translation renders the pronouns for "wisdom" in the neuter "it" (Prov. 1:20-21; 8:1-3, 11, etc.). This is a deliberate false translation made to avoid the feminine nature of the personification of wisdom.

7. The Jewish interpretation of Proverbs 8:22 is as follows: in the Midrash (Gen. I, 6), the Mishnah (Aboth 6:10), and the Babylonian Talmud (Pes. 54a, p. 265), wisdom was interpreted as a reference to the Torah or Law of God. It was never interpreted as reference to the Messiah. Neither did we find any messianic interpretation in Philo or in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.

8. As Dr. Kenneth Kantzer points out, "wisdom" in Proverbs 8, . . . is better taken as a personification of the divine attribute which God exercised in the creation of all things and which also he wishes to impart to men in order to lead them into a righteous life.⁵²

9. As a divine attribute, "wisdom" is said to be "brought forth" in the sense that God's wisdom was not displayed openly until He created the universe. It is the public display or manifestation of divine wisdom as seen in the act of creation that is in view.

10. The opposite of wisdom is folly. It too is personified as a woman in Proverbs 9:13-18. If personified wisdom is a real person (Jesus), who is the person personifying folly?

11. The attempt to use I Corinthians 1:24, 30 as "proof" that the word "wisdom" in Proverbs 8:1 refers to Jesus is a logical and hermeneutical fallacy. The word "wisdom" has many different meanings depending on the context and the date of the book in which it is found. There is nothing in Proverbs to warrant a messianic interpretation of wisdom. Not one rabbi ever saw the Messiah in the passage.

12. Nowhere else in the Old Testament or the New Testament is the Messiah depicted as a woman. Thus there would have to be overwhelming contextual reasons for interpreting the woman as the Messiah.

13. It is irrelevant that some of the older Trinitarian writers thought that Proverbs 8 referred to Christ. They also mistakenly thought that the Song of Solomon referred to Christ and the Church, when it is actually an erotic love poem celebrating the sexual love between a husband and his wife. Only those who follow an allegorical hermeneutic would think that Christ was the focus of Proverbs 8.

The only reason that the Arians refer to Proverbs 8:22-31 is to establish that the Christ of the New Testament was a created being. But in order to do this, they have to mistranslate the gender of the Hebrew nouns and verbs and misapply New Testament texts.

John 14:28

You heard that I said to you, "I go away, and I will come to you." If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; for *the Father is greater than I*.

ἤκούσατε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἶπον ὑμῖν, Ὑπάγω καὶ ἔρχομαι
πρὸς ὑμᾶς. εἰ ἠγαπάτέ με, ἐχάρητε ἂν ὅτι εἶπον,
Πορεύομαι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα· ὅτι ὁ πατὴρ μου μείζω

This has been a favorite text ever since Arius first used it himself. The Arian interpretation is that Jesus is here admitting that he is inferior to the Father in nature and being. Since he is inferior to the Father, then he cannot be God.

Analysis

The logical fallacies which underlies the Arian interpretation are the categorical fallacy of confusing the two natures of Christ and misrepresenting the doctrine of the deity of Christ.

Trinitarians believe that the second Person of the Trinity took upon himself human nature and was "man of very man" as well as "God of very God." As the God/man, he was dependent upon the Father for all things. He prayed to the Father and submitted to His will as a slave to his master. He humbled Himself even to embracing death on the cross (Phil. 2:5-7).

Is the Father "greater" in rank and power than you or me? Yes. Then John 14:28 is a marvelous proof of the Incarnation of Christ which is a Trinitarian doctrine. It proves that He was fully human.

The Watchtower, either in ignorance or deception, gives the impression that the doctrine of the Trinity teaches that Jesus was *only* God. Thus, if they can find passages in the Bible where He is described as speaking or acting as a *man*, they foolishly think they have refuted the Trinity!

Once again they have set up a straw man which does not reflect the doctrine of the Trinity. John 14:28 is a Trinitarian text which speaks of the earthly relationship between the incarnate Word and God the Father.

Also, please notice that the word in the text is “greater,” not “better.” The President by virtue of his office is “greater” than me, but this does not mean that he is “better” than me. The word “greater” refers to superior rank and office while the word “better” refers to superior nature and being. A.T. Robertson comments:

Greater than I (μεζίων μου). Ablative case μου after the comparative μεζίων (from positive μέγας). The filial relation makes this necessary. Not a distinction in nature or essence (cf. 10:30), but in rank in the Trinity. No Arianism or Unitarianism here. The very explanation here is proof of the deity of the Son (Dods).⁵³

The attempt to use a passage which speaks of Christ’s humanity as an argument against His deity is the result of taking a text of context and misapplying it.

Colossians 1:15

And He is the image of the invisible God, *the first-born of all creation.*

ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, πρωτότοκος
πάσης κτίσεως·

This is perhaps the most used text in the Arian arsenal. The Arian arguments are as follows:

1. Since God is invisible, then Christ cannot be God.
2. Christ is called the “First born of all creation” in the sense that he is the first one created at the beginning.

Analysis

The first argument is once again a straw man. No Trinitarian claims that the visible Son is the invisible Father. It is a categorical error to confuse the Father and the Son, as if they were one person.

In this ancient hymn to Christ, the phrase "image of the invisible God" (εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου) is actually an indication of the deity of Christ. It literally means that *what the Father is invisibly, the Son is visibly*.⁵⁴ It refers to His unique relationship to the Father. The word "image" (εἰκὼν) implies divine representation and manifestation.⁵⁵

Having related Christ to the Father, Paul now relates Christ to the universe. He is given the exalted title πρωτότοκος (First Born). At one time it was thought that πρωτότοκος was a unique biblical word. But it has now been found in numerous ancient inscriptions as far back as 5 BC.⁵⁶

The Arian interpretation is faulty for several reasons. If Paul wanted to say that Christ was the first thing *created*, he would have used the verb "to create" (κτίζω). Instead, he used a title of honor meaning the Preeminent One, the Head of all creation. Thus, it is not the chronology or order of creation, but the *honor* of the Creator Christ that is in view. Langkammer comments:

Gen. πάσης κτίσεως is dependent on πρωτότοκος and makes it clear that the firstborn stands in a relationship to creation as its mediator. Hence this is not a matter of a purely temporal priority of the preexistent Christ, but rather of a superiority in essence. . . . Christ, as the mediator of creation, is not a part of creation himself, but stands rather in a unique relationship to God, the "invisible."⁵⁷

The importance of the grammar of the Greek text must not be overlooked. A.T. Robertson points out:

The first born (πρωτοτοκος). Predicate adjective again and anarthrous. This passage is parallel to the Λογος passage in John 1:1-18 and to Heb 1:1-4 as well as Php 2:5-11 in which these three writers (John, author of Hebrews, Paul) give the high conception of the Person of Christ (both Son of God and Son of Man) found also in the Synoptic Gospels and even in Q (the Father, the Son). This word (LXX and N.T.) can no longer be considered purely "Biblical" (Thayer), since it is found in inscriptions (Deissmann, *Light, etc.*, p. 91) and in the papyri

(Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary, etc.*). See it already in Lu 2:7 and Aleph for Mt 1:25; Ro 8:29. The use of this word does not show what Arius argued that Paul regarded Christ as a creature like “all creation” (πάσης κτίσεως by metonymy the *act* regarded as *result*). It is rather the comparative (superlative) force of πρωτος that is used (first-born of all creation) as in Col 1:18; Ro 8:29; Heb 1:6; 12:23; Re 1:5. Paul is here refuting the Gnostics who pictured Christ as one of the aeons by placing him before “all creation” (angels and men). Like εικων we find πρωτοτοκος in the Alexandrian vocabulary of the Λογος teaching (Philo) as well as in the LXX. Paul takes both words to help express the deity of Jesus Christ in his relation to the Father as εικων (Image) and to the universe as πρωτοτοκος (First-born).⁵⁸

In its context, Colossians 1:15 is speaking of Christ as the *present* mediator and Creator of the world. Thus, it does not say that the Jesus was created in the distant past as the first thing created.

Since the passage goes on to say in verses 16 and 17 that Jesus created “all things,” *then He Himself cannot be a “thing.”* That this is a forceful argument is demonstrated by the deliberate mistranslation found in the New World Translation. In order to escape the logical conclusion that Jesus cannot be a created “thing,” it inserts the word [other] before the word “things” to give the impression that he is the first “thing”. Such a blatant disregard for Scripture reveals the absurd lengths to which the Society will go to avoid the deity of Christ.

Lastly, verse 16 states that all things have been created “*for Him.*” The antecedent is clearly Christ and, thus, He must be God for all things were created for His glory and honor.

Revelation 3:14

And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, *the Beginning of the creation of God*, says this:

Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐκκλησίας Λαοδικέων γράψον,
Τάδε λέγει ὁ Ἀμὴν, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ
ἀληθινός, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ·

The Arians seize upon the phrase “the beginning of the creation of God” as indicating that Jesus was numerically the first thing created.

Analysis

The word ἡ ἀρχὴ “the beginning” does not imply that Jesus was the first thing created. If it did, then the Jehovah’s Witnesses will have to reduce Jehovah to a creature because in Revelation 22:13, they apply the word ἀρχὴ to Jehovah:

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the first* and the last, the beginning and the end.”

ἐγὼ τὸ Α καὶ τὸ Ω, ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος.

In contrast, Trinitarians apply Revelation 22:13 as well as Revelation 1:8 and Revelation 3:14 to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Arians will have to either admit that Revelation 22:13 refers to Christ, which proves that He is God, or reduce Jehovah to a mere creature.

Jesus is also called ἀρχὴ in Colossians 1:18:

He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the *beginning*, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have preeminence in everything.

καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος, τῆς ἐκκλησίας· ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων·

Paul gives us several glorious titles for Christ, such as ἡ κεφαλὴ “the Head” and πρωτότοκος “First Born,” in addition to ἀρχή “Beginning.” Why? He states that he wants Jesus Christ to have the *preeminence in all things*.

In terms of Greek grammar, the words “all things” are emphatic. They are taken from the normal word order at the end of the sentence and placed before the verb πρωτεύων. Thus, when Paul said, “all things,” he meant, “ALL things” in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, material and spiritual. A literal translation would be: “in order that IN ALL THINGS he may be holding first place.” A.T. Robertson comments:

That in all things he might have the preeminence Purpose clause with ἵνα and the second aorist middle subjunctive of γίνομαι, “that he himself in all things (material and spiritual) may come to (γενηται, not ᾗ, be) hold the first place” (πρωτευων, present active participle of πρωτευω, old verb, to hold the first place, here only in the N.T.). Christ is first with Paul in time and in rank. See Rev 1:5 for this same use of πρωτοτοκος with των νεκρων (the dead).⁵⁰

What must be in order for what is to be what it is? If Paul viewed and worshipped Jesus as God, then we would expect to find such hymns of praise to Him. But, if Paul did not believe in the deity of Christ, such language must be deemed blasphemous and idolatrous.

The word ἄρχη is found fifty-five times in the New Testament. It has the definite article in Luke 20:20 as well as in Revelation 3:14:

And they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so as to deliver Him up to **the rule** and the authority of the governor. (Luke 20:20)

καὶ παρατηρήσαντες ἀπέστειλαν ἐγκαθέτους,
ὑποκρινομένους ἑαυτοὺς δικαίους εἶναι, ἵνα
ἐπιλάβωνται αὐτοῦ λόγου, εἰς τὸ παραδοῦναι αὐτὸν
τῇ ἄρχῇ καὶ τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ τοῦ ἡγεμόνος.

In this passage, the word τῇ ἄρχῃ is translated as “the rule” in the NASB. Even the New World Translation has “the government.” It is used in parallel to the word τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ “authority.” It has nothing to do with the idea of the first one created.

There are many detailed lexicographical discussions of the different meanings of the word ἄρχη which demonstrate that the word usually signifies *primacy*.⁶⁰ In Revelation 3:14, in order to magnify the superiority of Christ, John calls Jesus “the Origin of the creation of God,” i.e., He is the One *who created all things*. As Dean Alford states, “In Him the whole creation of God is begun and conditioned: He is its source and primary fountain-head.”⁶¹

James Moffatt comments:

The resemblance of τῇ ἄρχῃ k.t.l., to a passage in Colossians is noteworthy as occurring in an open letter to the neighboring

church of Laodicea. . . . Here the phrase denotes "the active principle of God's universe or creation."⁶²

Lenski's penetrating analysis concludes our discussion of this text:

"The Arche" resembles "the First" used in 1:17. By no means does this title mean that the Lord is the first creature created by God. . . . Our Lord is the source of the creation of God, the beginning of it in an active sense. The two *διὰ* in John 1:3, 10 plus the *χωρὶς* make him the absolute medium of the whole creation. Had it not been for him, there would have been no creation. All creation exists only with reference to him, otherwise it would not even exist."⁶³

Conclusion

We have been able only to offer the briefest analysis of the nature, origins, history, and arguments of Arianism. It springs from philosophic ideas foreign to the Bible and biblical religion. It is reactionary in nature and spends most of its time trying to tear down the doctrine of the Trinity. It even inaligns the character and motives of those who worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, blessed God Three in One! In the last analysis, it falls under the *ἀνάθεμα* of God pronounced by the apostle Paul in I Corinthians 16:22.

If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed.
Maranatha.

Notes

1. The fullest treatment of Arianism in modern times is by Richard Patrick Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1988). We do not agree with everything he says, but it is the fullest treatment so far. See also William Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, and Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1970).
2. We will be using Rusch's translation of the primary documents: William G. Rusch, *The Trinitarian Controversy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1980), 29. For discussions on this new material see: *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments*, ed. Robert Gregg (Philadelphia: Patristic Foundation, 1985), 1-58.
3. Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophic Implications of Arianism and Apollinarianism* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1958), 12-13.
4. Rusch, 32.
5. Richard Patrick Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1988), 86-87.
6. Phaedo 105C *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. Jowett (New York: Random, 1937), 1:490.
7. Compare G.C. Stead's article, "The Platonism of Arius," *JTS*, n.s., 15, (1964), pgs. 16-37 and Charles Kannengiesser in *Arius and Athanasius* (Hampshire, England: Varionrum, 1991), 20-24. Stead at times falls into the trap of making theological distinctions where Arius made none.
8. Rusch, 17.
9. Rusch, 32.
10. Cornelius J. Hagerty, *The Holy Trinity* (North Quincy, MASS: Christopher, 1976), 164, see also 163. "Arius denied the communicability of the divine nature." This was also pointed out by Rowan Williams, *Arius* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1965), 224-232.
11. Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 63.
12. Larry Helyer, "Arius Revisited" (*JET*, 31:1 March 1988), 59.

13. Rusch, 17.
14. Fortman, 63.
15. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1990), 85.
16. Hegerty, 169.
17. The Demiurge created a host of demigods to do his will: Apol. 27; Tim. 41E; Statesman 271 D; Laws 4.713 D, 717 B; 5. 727 A, 738 B, D, 740 A; 801 E; 8 848 D; 9.853 C; 10. 906 A, 910 A.
18. Kannengiesser, Charles, *Arius and Athanasius* (Hempshire, England: Varionrum, 1991), 1.
19. Wolfson, *The Philosophic Implications of Arianism and Apollinarianism*, 6.
20. The Watchtower, 15 Feb 1983, 18.
21. J.W. Nevin, "Arianism" (*The Mercerburg Review*, 1867), 14:428. See also Simonetti, in "Studi Sull' Arianesimo," 91, 124, n. 66. He states that Arianism arose as an extreme reaction to Sabellianism.
22. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 7:419-420.
23. Ibid., 7:474-475. See also *The Two Treatises of Servetus on the Trinity* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1932); Philip Schaff, "Calvin and Servetus" (*The Reformed Journal*, Jan. 1893), 1:5-54.
24. For the history and beliefs of Socinianism, see pgs. 62-67, in my book, *Battle of the Gods*. See also George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 639-669; *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
25. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1989), 27.
26. *Awake*, Jan. 8, 1973, 17-18. See also *The Watchtower*, 1 March 1948, 67.
27. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, 7-11.
28. When Linda Cebrian read *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, she noticed that the Watchtower Society gave numerous citations from

various books without supplying any bibliographical information such as the date and publisher of the book or even the page number from which the quote was taken. On July 18, 1991, she wrote to the Society and asked for the documentation. They replied on Sept. 17, 1991 (letter on file) by sending her several pages from Lamson's book against the Trinity which was written in 1869!

29. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, 4.

30. *Ibid.*, 5.

31. *Aid to Bible Understanding* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1971), 889.

32. *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, 12:995

33. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 430.

34. J. Gresham Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965). This is still considered the classic work on the subject. When combined with Yamauchi's work, the pagan origin theory is left without a leg to stand upon. See also Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

35. Quoted in Edwin Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 244. Prof. Yamauchi's book is one of the most important works in the twentieth century. He demonstrates that there are no pre-Christian Gnostic writings which contain the redeemer-myth.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*, 207.

38. John Richardson Illingworth, *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Macmillan, 1907), ix.

39. *Ibid.*, 74-75.

40. Yamauchi, 192-193.

41. John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976).

42. David Estrada and William White, Jr., *The First New Testament* (Nashville: Nelson, 1978) This book is available from the REF (P.O. Box 250, Newport, PA, 17074)

43. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, 9.
44. *Ibid.*, 11.
45. *Ibid.*, 10.
46. *Ibid.*, 11.
47. *Awake*, 22 Aug. 1976, 23f.
48. *The Watchtower*, 1 Feb. 1940, 44. This phrase is also found in the *Watchtower Reprints*, 15 Sept. 1939, 284.
49. See Adler's overview of the history of the concept of causality in *The Great Ideas* (Chicago: Britannica, 1952), 1:158f.
50. Walter R. Martin, *Jehovah of the Watchtower*; Edmund Charles Gruss, *Apostles of Denial*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R: 1974); Bruce M. Metzger, "The Jehovah's Witnesses and Jesus Christ," (*Theology Today*, Apr. 1953). For a further listing of material see Robert A. Morey, *How to Answer a Jehovah's Witness* (Minnesota: Bethany, 1974).
51. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, 14.
52. *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, 554. See also Keil and Delitzsch, *Proverbs*, I:183; *Lange's Commentary*, 5:98-104.
53. *Word Pictures*, 5:255. See also Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel*, 1020-1021.
54. Eadie, *Colossians*, 43-52.
55. J.B. Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 144-145; Rienecker and Rogers, 567.
56. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3:189-191.
57. *Ibid.*, 3:190.
58. *Word Pictures*, 4:477-478.
59. *Ibid.*, 4:480.
60. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 1:161-163; Thayer, 76-77; Arndt and Gingrich, 111-112.

61. Alford, 4:588.

62. *The Expositor's Greek New Testament*, 5:370.

63. Lenski, *Revelation*, 153.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Modalism

The heresy of Modalism is not as well known as Arianism. It has been called by many different names down through the centuries: Sabellianism, Patripassianism, Monarchianism, Modalistic Monarchianism, functionalism, Jesus Only, Father Only, and Oneness Pentecostalism. It was one of the earliest heresies to afflict the Christian Church.

Since most people have never heard of Modalism, the first thing we must do is explain what it teaches and how it relates to the doctrine of the Trinity. But this is not as easy as it seems. It is one of the most confusing and self-contradictory heresies in the history of the Christian Church.

Its Pagan Origins

From the beginning, Modalism was based on the Platonic doctrine that God was an *indivisible* Monad and could not be divided into three separate Persons. Thus, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not to be viewed as three distinct Persons, but as three different manifestations, modes, administrations, disguises, roles, or offices of one and the same Person.

The Divine Actor

When an actor puts on different masks or disguises in order to pretend to be several different characters during a play, he does not become more than one person. He is still one and the same person behind those masks. In the same way, according to Modalism, the “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit” are only three different masks or disguises which God puts on in the theater of history. There is only one Person behind the masks of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Two Natures Talking to Each Other

If this is true, then how can the Bible describe the Father speaking to the Son in such places as Matthew 3:17? If there is only one Person in the conversation, is He talking to Himself? The Modalist’s typical answer is that the divine nature or the spirit of Jesus is talking to the human nature

or the flesh of Jesus. Thus, the dual *natures* of Christ are talking to each other.

Admittedly, this concept is quite confusing. How can two *natures* talk to each other? Doesn't a conversation require two *persons* interacting? How can one nature be the Master and the other nature the servant? How can one nature send the other nature to do a task for Him? The Modalist doctrine of the two natures of Christ talking to each other is a greater mystery than the Trinity.

Jesus Is the Father

Who is this One Person? The first Modalists believed that the Father was the Person hiding behind the masks. Thus, if you removed the mask of the Son or the mask of the Holy Spirit, you would find the "Father only." It was, thus, the Father who was incarnate in the womb of the Virgin. It was the Father who lived on earth and died for our sins. It was even the Father who descended upon Jesus as the Holy Spirit at His baptism. It was the Father who was poured out on the day of Pentecost. The Son and the Holy Spirit are only the Father manifesting Himself in different disguises, ways, or modes.

The Father Is Jesus

Instead of saying that "Jesus is the Father," most modern Modalists reverse the order and say that "the Father is Jesus." Jesus is the indivisible Person behind the masks of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And, once you remove those masks, you will see "Jesus only."

In the end, it does not really matter whether the one indivisible Person is the Father or Jesus because the Trinity is destroyed either way. The main problem confronting both kinds of Modalists is that they begin with the *a priori* assumption that God is one *indivisible* Person and *cannot* be divided into more than one person. When they reject the Trinity on this basis, they are simply arguing in a circle.

With these brief words of introduction, let us begin our study of Modalism with a historical analysis of its origins and ideas.

Praxeas

Modalism first made its appearance in the teachings of Praxeas (ca. 200).¹ All we know about him comes from those refuting him such as Tertullian. He believed that God was indivisible in nature and could only be one Person. Thus, the Son and the Holy Spirit were not separate

persons from the Father. They were only the Father in different manifestations.

The two natures of Christ were reinterpreted by Praxeas to mean that the Son of God is the human nature of Christ which had a beginning, while the divine nature or spirit of Christ is the Father who is eternal. Falling into the same error as the Gnostics, Praxeas made a distinction between the man Jesus and the Christ.

The only reason Praxeas gained a hearing for his strange doctrine was that he had suffered persecution for the faith in Asia. Using his status as a martyr, he gained a hearing in Rome for his new doctrine. When the Trinitarians began to confront him, he fled to North Africa and ended up in Carthage.

While in Carthage, Tertullian (A.D. 125-220) convinced Praxeas of the error of his ways and Praxeas gave a public recantation of his doctrines. But this was not to last. Praxeas eventually returned to his heresies and Tertullian responded by writing an entire volume against him. He introduced his discussion with these words:

In various ways has the devil rivaled and resisted the truth. Sometimes his aim has been to destroy the truth by defending it. He maintains that there is only one Lord, the Almighty Creator of the world, in order that out of this doctrine of the unity he may fabricate a heresy. He says that the Father Himself came down into the Virgin, was Himself born of her, Himself suffered, indeed was Himself Jesus Christ. . . . By this Praxeas did a two-fold service for the devil at Rome: he drove away prophecy, and he brought in heresy; he put to flight the Paraclete, and crucified the Father. . . . In the course of time, then, the Father forsooth was born, and the Father suffered, God Himself, the Lord Almighty, whom in their preaching they declare to be Jesus Christ.²

Tertullian's tough-minded Christianity seems out of place in this present age of latitudinarianism. But the early Fathers had to deal with many grave heresies which threatened the churches over which they had spiritual oversight (Acts 20:28-30). They knew that there was a Day of Judgment when they would have to give an account of their ministry (Heb. 13:17). They knew that part of the responsibility of being a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was the task of refuting religious error, i.e., apologetics (Jude 3). According to Scripture, a presbyter must:

Titus 1:9-11 . . . be able *both* to exhort in sound doctrine *and to refute those who contradict*. For there are many rebellious men,

empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, *who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach*, for the sake of sordid gain.

We must also keep in mind that Tertullian knew Praxeas personally and that he felt betrayed by his return to heresy.

Patripassianism

Because the Modalists were saying that it was actually the Father who was born, lived, died on the cross, arose, and ascended into heaven, while *pretending* to be the Son of God, the term Patripassianism was developed by combining the Latin words *pater* (father) and *passus* (from *patior* "to suffer"). This word Patripassianism, thus, refers to the suffering of the Father when He appeared on earth as the Son of God.

Noetus

The second Modalist to arise was Noetus (ca. 190). He was probably a native of Smyrna who became a presbyter in Ephesus. He taught that the Father was the Son, and the Son was the Father. The other presbyters complained about his teachings and a council was called at Smyrna.

At the council, Noetus evaded all accusations by claiming that he was being taken out of context and that he was really orthodox in his views of the Trinity. But shortly afterwards, having gained a few disciples, he openly proclaimed what he had denied before the council.

Noetus was then called before a second council at Smyrna, but this time he did not hide his views, but openly defended them. He was excommunicated for heresy. But this did not stop Noetus. He alleged that he was Moses and that his brother was Aaron! He then set up his own school and continued to teach his doctrines. But he died shortly after and his school perished.

The third century church Father Hippolytus (A.D. 170-236), in his famous work *The Refutation of All Heresies*, dedicated book IX to Noetus:

There has appeared one, Noetus by name, and by birth a native of Smyrna. This person introduced a heresy from the tenets of Heraclitus. Now a certain man called Epigonus becomes his minister and pupil, and this person during his sojourn at Rome disseminated his godless opinion.³

The Judgment of the Early Church

In whatever form Modalism appeared, it was universally condemned by both the Greek and Latin Church. Tertullian concludes his refutation of Modalism with these words:

Away, then, with those "Antichrists who deny the Father and the Son." For they deny the Father, when they say that He is the same as the Son; and they deny the Son, when they suppose him to be the same as the Father, by assigning to Them things which are not *Theirs*, and taking away from them things which are *Theirs*. But "whosoever shall confess that (Jesus) Christ is the Son of God (not the Father), "God dwelleth in him, and he in God."⁷

Tertullian's words may seem harsh to those who have never suffered for their faith. But the early Fathers were men of iron who had been forged in the fierce fires of persecution. Since they were willing to *die* for what they believed, they did not hesitate to defend it vigorously whenever it was attacked.

Gnosticism and Modalism

Modalism was a natural reaction to Gnosticism's cold, abstract deity who never got involved with man or his salvation. The Modalist's god came to earth where he suffered and died for our salvation. This is why they thought they were glorifying Christ when they said that he was a manifestation of the Father. But by denying His personhood, they actually reduced the birth, life and death of the Son of God to a mere charade.

Arianism and Modalism

Modalism's adoption of Plato's concept of the indivisibility of the divine Monad paved the way for the rise of Arianism. It was just as easy for Arius to conclude from the indivisibility of the Monad that the Son and the Holy Spirit were not God as it was for Sabellius to conclude that the Son and the Holy Spirit were not Persons. While Arius may have publicly rejected Sabellius, he was just as guilty of drinking from the same poisoned well of Greek philosophy.

Swedenborgianism and Modalism

Modalism disappeared for most of church history until we come to the late 1700s. The great scientist, politician, and mystic, Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), was the founder of modern Modalism. As Colin Wilson points out in his history of the occult:

The greatest occultist of the eighteenth century . . . Emanuel Swedenborg was a natural medium, although his powers developed late in life.⁸

Swedenborg's occultic teachings were later adopted by Freemasonry and can still be found in some of its higher degrees. He also became known for his many strange beliefs. For example, he stated in his book *Conjugal Love*, that extra-marital affairs with mistresses and concubines were acceptable under the right circumstances!⁹ In 1784, he had a dream in which he saw snakes in his hair. When he awoke, he said that the snakes were the departed spirits of Quakers.¹⁰

Beginning in 1744, Swedenborg had a series of dreams in which he supposedly received divine revelations. It was revealed to him that the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity was wrong. God was not three Persons, but one Person, and this one Person was the Lord Jesus Christ:

Instead of a Trinity of Persons there is a Trinity of Person. . . . A Trinity of Person is this: That the Lord's Divine [nature] is the Father, the Divine Humanity the Son and the proceeding Divine the Holy Spirit . . . for the Divine is not divisible.¹¹

He had both a Divine [nature] and a human [nature] . . . from the mother Mary in time.¹²

God is one in both Person and essence; that the Trinity is in Him; and that this God is the Lord [Jesus].¹³

God is one in person and essence in whom there is a trinity, and that this God is the Lord [Jesus]; and also that the trinity in Him is called the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and that the Divine from which, [Creative Divine] is called the Father; the Human Divine, the Son; and the proceeding Divine, the Holy Spirit . . . it is not in accord with enlightened reason to recognize the proceeding Divine as a Divine, *per se*, and to call it God, and, thus, divide God.¹⁴

God is one in person and essence . . . and the Lord [Jesus] is that God. . . . How can the Divine essence, which is infinite, be divided?¹⁵

Gather up the reasons, then, and consider whether there is any other God of the universe than the Lord [Jesus] alone, in whom the essential Divine, from which are all things, is that which we called the Father; the Divine Human is that which we called the Son, and the Divine going forth is called the Holy Spirit; thus that God is one in person and in essence, and that the Lord [Jesus] is that God.¹⁶

From the citations above, it is clear that Swedenborg like Praxeas, Noetus, and Sabellius began by assuming the Platonic concept of the indivisibility of God. Thus, his rejection of the Trinity was certain from the outset.

His unique contribution was that he revived the ancient heresy that the two natures of Christ meant that the Divine nature was the Father and the human nature was the Son and the “proceeding” (even he admitted he did not know what that was) was the Holy Spirit. Jesus was, thus, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

One last point about Swedenborg: since he was an occultist and received his doctrine of Modalism from the spirit world, the warning of the Apostle Paul seems highly appropriate:

I Tim. 4:1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, *paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.*

The Nineteenth Century

Swedenborg’s modalistic interpretation of the two natures of Christ was defended in 1874 by F. H. Burris in his book *The Trinity*.¹⁷ And then again in 1876 by John Miller in his book *Is The Trinity True?*¹⁸ In the same year, Robert Weeks published his book *Jehovah Jesus*. In it he states:

The Lord Jesus Christ, in his divine nature, is not “God the Son,” but the one only indivisible and undivided God, in all His fullness.”¹⁹

He [i.e. Jesus] is not God the Son, but God the Father.²⁰

He was, then, God the Father, or not God at all.²¹

“All the fullness of the Godhead” must include God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost.²²

the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ was and is GOD THE FATHER, *not* “God the Son;” that he is the one only undivided

and indivisible God, in all the perfection of his being and attributes.²³

Notice that Weeks like Swedenborg begins with the Platonic doctrine of the indivisibility of God as the *a priori* basis of his rejection of the Trinity. He also followed Swedenborg's interpretation of the two natures of Christ.

Modalism Today

In 1913, a Pentecostal preacher (some say McAlister, while others say Schaefer) during a camp meeting in Arroyo Seco, California, had a "revelation" in which he was told that they should not use the Trinitarian baptismal formula given in Matthew 28:19. Instead, they should baptize "in Jesus name only."

In order to justify this new "revelation," it was not long before R.E. McAlister, John Schaefer, Frank Ewart, Glen Cook, and many others came to the conclusion that Jesus was the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

These events soon developed into a "Jesus Only" or "Oneness Pentecostal" movement. A great deal of controversy was created, until the Oneness people were cast out of the Assemblies of God.

The United Pentecostals, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, Church of the Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Church of Jesus, and over a hundred other "Jesus Only" groups teach that Jesus is the Person who manifests Himself as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus, they baptize in the name of "Jesus only" instead of in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

In contrast to the above, there are "Father Only" Pentecostal churches which believe that it is the Father who manifested Himself as the Son and the Holy Spirit. They, likewise, reject the Trinitarian formula and baptize in the name of the "Father Only."²⁴

Swedenborgianism and Oneness Pentecostals

The link between the occultist Swedenborg and modern "Oneness" Pentecostals is admitted by Dr. David Bernard, who is a leading United Pentecostal theologian. According to Bernard:

Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was a Swedish philosopher and religious writer who expressed a good understanding of the oneness of God. He taught a number of other

doctrines that are very different from what we believe, but he did have a revelation of who Jesus really is. He used the term *trinity* but said it was only "three modes of manifestations" and not a trinity of eternal persons. He used Col. 2:9 to prove that all the "trinity" was in Jesus Christ, and he referred to Isa. 9:6 and John 10:30 to prove that Jesus was the Father . . . He saw God (Jesus) as composed of Father, Son, and Spirit. . . . Swedenborg's explanation of the Godhead is strikingly similar to that of modern Oneness believers.²⁵

Modalism and Gnosticism

The Gnostics felt superior to everyone else because they were the recipients of private revelations, dreams, and visions. While the Christians were busy "examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11), the Gnostics obtained their doctrines directly through private revelation.

Modalism has always had a Gnostic dependence on private revelations, dreams and visions. The revelations supposedly received by Swedenborg, McAlister, Schaefe, and others produced the modern Oneness movement. One of their chief historians Frank J. Ewart states:

I consider the revelation of the Oneness of God to be fundamental to participation in the "faith once delivered to the saints."²⁶

Ewart goes on to say that the *basis* of Oneness theology is:

an experience, and not some theological premis that had been developed after years of study and re-evaluation.²⁷

The undue dependence on private revelation instead of the careful study of Scripture has always been the mother of heresy. This is why Scripture condemns those who depend upon private revelations for doctrinal truth:

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, *taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind.* (Col. 2:18)

The Renaissance New Testament translates the verse as follows:

Let no self-appointed umpire disqualify you because of affected humility and worship of angels, rationalizing about visions he has seen because he is puffed up with stupid theories which have their source in the rationalization of his depraved nature.²⁸

William Hendriksen comments:

This man *pretends* (perhaps even *believed*) to have seen something, and he presumes on this experience he has had. He makes the most of it. If any one ventures to contradict him or to question the truth of his theories, he will answer, "But I have seen such and such a vision." In saying this and in relating the vision he will, of course, assume an air of deep insight into divinely revealed mysteries. He prides himself on what he regards as his superior knowledge. . . . He is, continues Paul, **without cause puffed up by his fleshly mind**. Note, "without cause," that is, though he is filled with an exalted opinion of himself, he has no good reason to feel this way. His mind, moreover, is distinctly *the mind of the flesh*, the attitude or disposition of heart and mind *apart from regenerating grace*.²⁹

Instead of being proud over their visions, dreams, and revelations, the Modalists should be ashamed. They need to search the Scriptures instead of following the erroneous revelations of pretended modern day visionaries.

The Arguments of Modalists

The arguments advanced by modern Modalists are usually borrowed from the 19th century Unitarians or the Jehovah's Witnesses. Dr. David Bernard is one of the best teachers the United Pentecostals ever produced. We will use his book *The Oneness of God* as an example of the standard Oneness arguments against the Trinity.

Ten Basic Arguments

Dr. Bernard gives ten basic arguments against the Trinity:

1. Trinitarians are guilty of polytheism in that they actually believe in three gods.³⁰ This is why he spends a great deal of time proving monotheism, as if it disproved the Trinity.

2. "The terminology of trinitarianism is not biblical."³¹ It is very important to Oneness people that the word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible. This is one of Dr. Bernard's "big" arguments. Yet, their own theological words such as "Oneness," "modes," "manifestations," etc., are not found in the Bible *either*.
3. The Trinity was a 4th century invention.³²
4. "Trinitarianism has its roots in paganism."³³
5. It was borrowed from Greek philosophy.³⁴
6. "It is not logical."³⁵
7. "It contradicts many specific verses of Scripture."³⁶
8. "No one can understand or explain it rationally, not even those who advocate it."³⁷
9. Since the doctrine of the Trinity is said to be a "mystery," this is proof that it is in error.³⁸
10. The Trinity doctrine is self-contradictory.³⁹ To prove this he gives 26 trick questions, most of which appeared long ago in Watchtower magazines and books.

Our Analysis

Since we have already dealt with these arguments in our chapter on Arianism, we refer the reader to the previous chapter. The objections raised against the Trinity doctrine are usually self-refuting. For example, Dr. Bernard criticizes the doctrine of the Trinity because:

. . . the Trinity is a mystery our finite human minds cannot comprehend fully.⁴⁰

He then urges his readers to reject the Trinity on the basis of its admitted incomprehensibility. Yet, elsewhere in the same book, he admits that much of what he believes about God transcends human reason!⁴¹ In our chapter on the incomprehensibility of God, we demonstrated that both the Old and New Testaments teach that God exceeds the finite capacity of the human mind.

The Twenty-Six Logical Fallacies

The 26 trick questions posed by Bernard would be a good exercise for a first year logic class when it comes to identifying logical fallacies. Each question is based upon one or more logical errors. For example, he asks:

If Father and Son are co-equal persons, why did Jesus pray to the Father?⁴²

This question is based on the categorical fallacy of confusing the ontological Trinity with the economical Trinity and the pre-existence of Christ with the Incarnation. It is also a straw man argument for what Trinitarian teaches that the historical, economical relationship of the Father to the Son *after* the Incarnation is the same as their eternal, ontological relationship *before* the Incarnation?

At the Incarnation, the Son of God humbled Himself and became a man (Phil. 2:2-7). As a man, he was dependent for all things upon the One who sent Him.

Another trick question raised by Bernard is:

If the Son is eternal and existed at creation, who was His mother at that time?⁴³

This is what is called in logic a “nonsense” question. It as irrational as asking, “Can you draw a square circle?” An *eternal* Son by definition cannot have a mother.

Bernard then tries to pit the eternal immutability of the pre-Incarnate Son of God against the temporality of the Messianic kingdom He established when on earth:

If the Son is eternal and immutable (unchangeable), how can the reign of the Son have an end?⁴⁴

This question is a straw man argument. Trinitarians do not believe that the Messianic kingdom is eternal. It *began* with the ministry of Christ on earth and was established when He was sat down at the right hand of the Father in heaven and will *end* when He returns in glory (I Cor. 15:20-27). This question is also the categorical fallacy of confusing the ontological Trinity with the economical Trinity.

Jesus Is the Father

Bernard believes that when the Bible speaks about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, it is actually talking about Jesus. Thus, he had to prove that Jesus is the Father. His first proof that Jesus is the Father is a logical syllogism:

If there is only one God and that God is the Father (Mal. 2:10), and if Jesus is God, then it logically follows that Jesus is the Father.⁴⁵

This syllogism is interesting. If A (there is only one X) is true and B (the Father is X) is true and C (Jesus is X) is true, then Jesus is the Father according to Bernard. But there is no way you can logically deduce that Jesus is the Father from this syllogism. The distributed term is X (God) and not Jesus. Thus, the only thing you can logically deduce from this syllogism is that, if there is only one God and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each God, then the Three must be God. This deduction supports the Trinity.

The Biblical Arguments

Besides the sophomoric trick questions, Dr. Bernard puts forth a number of Scriptures which he feels proves that Jesus is the Father and the Holy Spirit. His basic working presupposition which guides his interpretation of the Bible is the Platonic doctrine of the indivisibility of God. He both begins and ends with the assumption that God is absolutely and indivisibly one in Person.⁴⁶

This is once again circular reasoning. If you *begin* by *defining* God in such a way that the Trinity is *not* possible, then it is no big surprise if you conclude that the Trinity is not possible! You are returning full circle to where you first began.

The vast majority of the biblical passages advanced by Dr. Bernard do not prove that Jesus is the Father. For example, proving that Jesus is God does not prove that He is the Father. Hence, Bernard needlessly spends many pages proving the deity of Christ, as if Trinitarians did not accept the doctrine.

The Name of Jesus Is the Father

Bernard first attempts to prove that the Jesus is the Father by pointing out that the name "Father" is one of the names of Jesus according to Isaiah 9:6. He assumes as an *a priori* given that if "Father" is a name of Jesus, then this must mean that Jesus is God the Father. But Bernard's argument is not logically valid. He is guilty of the fallacy of equivocation because the name "Father" can have several different meanings. For example, I am called "Father" by my children. Does this mean that I am God the Father? Of course not.

In the same way, just because Jesus is called "Father" in Isaiah 9:6, this does not necessarily mean that He is God the Father. The name "Father" can have numerous meanings. It is not enough to quote Isaiah 9:6 as a "proof text" and then go merrily on your way as if you have proven that Jesus is God the Father.

In its context, Isaiah 9:6 calls Jesus "Father" in the sense of His being the Origin or Source of eternal life, i.e., salvation. It is the Messiah's work of redemption that is in view.

Bernard then sets forth another passage in which he thinks that "Father" is a name of Jesus.

John 5:43

"I have come *in My Father's name*, and you do not receive Me; if another shall come in his own name, you will receive him."

Dr. Bernard believes that in this verse "Father" is the name of Jesus:

It is important to note that the name of the Father is Jesus, for this name fully reveals and expresses the Father. In John 5:43, Jesus said, "I am come in my Father's name."⁴⁷

If the phrase "coming in the name of" means that you are the person in whose name you are coming, then we are all in big trouble! David said to the Philistines:

"You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but *I come to you in the name of [Yahweh] of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel*, whom you have taunted." (I Sam. 17:45)

If Bernard's reasoning is correct, then David's name is "Yahweh of Hosts" and "the God of the armies of Israel." Of course, such an idea is ridiculous. The phrase "in the name of" means "by the authority of." Jesus did things by the *authority* of the Father.

Jesus Is the Father

Bernard now attempts to demonstrate that there are passages in the Bible where Jesus is the Father. One of the favorite passages of Modalists down through the ages is Zechariah 12:10:

"And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born."

וְשִׁפְכִי עַל-בֵּית דָּוִיד וְעַל יוֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם רוּחַ חֵן
וְתַחֲנוּנִים וְהִבִּיטוּ אֵלַי אֶחָד אֲשֶׁר-דָּקְדְּקוּ וְסָפְדוּ עָלָיו
כַּמִּסְפָּד עַל-הַיָּחִיד וְהָמָר עָלָיו כְּהָמָר עַל-הַבְּכוֹר:

The Oneness argument is quite simple. Since it is Jesus who died on the cross and the Father is pictured in Zechariah 12:10 as the One who died on the cross, then Jesus is the Father.

This verse has been a battle ground for many centuries. David Cooper comments:

This passage, though very plain, has been a storm-center of ceaseless controversy and has been translated differently, according to theological bias, by different ones.⁴⁸

Thomas Moore supplies us with the reason *why* it is so controversial:

This passage has always been regarded as one of no small difficulty; at least, the expositors have found no small difficulty with it, from the fact that *if its obvious meaning be admitted, a real prophecy and a suffering and yet divine Messiah must also be admitted . . . so that if it refers to the Messiah, he cannot be a mere man, but must be divine.*

Hence, the only meaning that the text will bear is, that Jehovah is the speaker, and that he is speaking of himself, and the manner in which he has been treated by his people and will be hereafter.⁴⁹

In his commentary on Zechariah, David Baron introduces the verse by pointing out that "there is not another scripture in the Old Testament around which more controversy has raged."⁵⁰

The problem arises because the One who is pierced is clearly Yahweh according to verse 1:

Zech. 12:1 The burden of the word of [Yahweh] (יְהוָה) concerning Israel. Thus declares [Yahweh] (יְהוָה) who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him.

To the dismay of Jews, Muslims, Unitarians, rationalists, and Arians, this passage reveals that the Speaker who is pierced is Yahweh. But a “pierced God” is too close to the Christian doctrine of the death of Christ. Thus, they go to extreme lengths in order to avoid the obvious meaning of the text. But the Hebrew text is as clear as the English:

וְהָבִיטוּ אֵלַי אֶת אֲשֶׁר־דָּקְרוּ

And they will look on Me whom they have pierced. (Zech. 12:10).

Several comments are in order.

First, there are no textual difficulties with the word אֵלַי (to Me). There are no variant readings in the Hebrew Text or in the Septuagint, Talmud, Targum, or even in the Latin Vulgate. Thus, the attempt of some modern Jews to change אֵלַי (to me) to אֵלָיו (to him) is without justification.⁵¹ That some English translations have changed the wording to “him” instead of “me” is abominable.⁵²

Second, neither is there any doubt that the word דָּקְרוּ should be translated “they have pierced.” The word דָּקְרוּ means to be “pierced.”⁵³ It is used eleven times in the Old Testament and has no other meaning.⁵⁴

Third, there is no justification whatsoever for moving the verse from its position in 12:10 to 13:3, as Lowe suggests.⁵⁵ Such a “scissors and paste” approach to the Hebrew text is simply outrageous.

The history of the interpretation of Zechariah 12:10 is interesting. The Babylonian Talmud gives the interpretation that the One pierced was the Messiah:

What is the cause of the mourning? R. Dosa and the Rabbis differ on this point. One explained, The cause is the slaying of Messiah the son of Joseph, and the other explained, The cause is the slaying of the Evil Inclination. It is well according to him who explains that the cause is the slaying of the Messiah the son of Joseph, since that well agrees with the Scriptural verse, *And they shall look upon me because they have thrust him through, and shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son.*⁵⁶

The Rabbis correctly translated 'לִּי as "to me" but then violated the grammar of the Hebrew text by making the verb "pierced" modify "him" instead of "me." In this way, they made it clear that the Messiah was the One pierced.

From this passage and many other rabbinic references, it is clear that the majority of the Rabbis viewed Zechariah 12:10 as prophesying that the Messiah would be pierced. This is important to point out because some modern Jews claim that this Messianic interpretation is a "Christian" error.⁵⁷

The Christian Church has always interpreted the One pierced as the Son and not the Father. This is why the early Christians rejected Praxeas who was the father of "patripassianism" which taught that:

the Father Himself came down into the Virgin, was Himself born of her, Himself suffered, indeed was Himself Jesus Christ.⁵⁸

Modern patripassianists, such as the United Pentecostals, have interpreted Zechariah 12:10 to mean that the Father is Jesus who is pierced. But this is not how the New Testament interprets it. In John's Gospel, we find that Zechariah 12:10 was fulfilled when the Son of God was pierced by a spear while He hung on the cross:

John 19:32-34, 36-7 The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other man who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs; but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water. . . . For these things came to pass, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN." And again another Scripture says, "THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY HAVE PIERCED."

The apostle John clearly viewed Zechariah 12:10 as being fulfilled when the soldier pierced the crucified body of the Son on the cross. In the book of Revelation, he gives this same interpretation again:

Rev. 1:7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, *even those who pierced Him*; and *all* the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen.

The Messiah is the One who is pierced as well as the Son who is mourned. Zechariah 12:10, therefore, does not refer to *all* three Persons of

the Trinity, but only to the Son and to the Spirit. This interpretation is the only one which does justice to the other messianic prophecies, such as Zechariah 13:7, which also refer to the Messiah (Matt. 26:31).

Philippians 2:9-11

Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him *the name which is above every name*, that at *the name of Jesus* EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

διὸ καὶ ὁ Θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσε, καὶ ἐχαρίσατο
αὐτῷ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα· ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι
Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψη ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων
καὶ Καταχθονίων, καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται
ὅτι Κύριος, Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς, εἰς δόξαν Θεοῦ
πατρὸς.

It is argued by Oneness preachers that since "the name above all names" (ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα) is Jesus, then Jesus must be the Father. The fatal problem with this argument is that the "Name above all names" is *not* Jesus (Ἰησοῦ) but "Lord," (Κύριος) i.e., Yahweh.

The text does not say "at the name Jesus," but "at the name OF Jesus," i.e., the name which *belongs to* Jesus. In terms of Greek grammar, it is the genitive of possession, not identification. The "Name" is revealed in verse 11 as "Lord," i.e., Yahweh.

The Name "Jesus"

We must remember that the name "Jesus" (Ἰησοῦς) was a common, ordinary, everyday name like John or Peter. In the first century, many men bore the name "Jesus." The average Christian does not know this because he or she is ignorant of the original languages and the Old Testament usage of the name "Joshua."

In the Hebrew Old Testament, we find that the successor of Moses was named יְהוֹשֻׁעַ. This name is translated in our English versions as "Joshua," but it could have just as easily been translated as "Jesus."

In the Septuagint, the Jews rendered יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (Joshua) in the Greek as Ἰησοῦς (Jesus). The word Ἰησοῦς (Jesus) is translated in the NASB 101 times as “Joshua” and once as “Jeshua” (Ezra 2:6).

The Greek New Testament followed the Septuagint in using the word Ἰησοῦς (Jesus) as its name for Joshua.

For if Joshua (Ἰησοῦς) had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. (Heb. 4:8)

The reader may be asking himself, “Why do our English versions translate the same word Ἰησοῦς as ‘Joshua’ in one place and ‘Jesus’ in another? Why weren’t they consistent and just use ‘Joshua’ or ‘Jesus’ wherever the word is found?”

The translators assumed that, if they called the successor of Moses “Jesus” or the Son of God “Joshua,” the average person would soon confuse the two. If they translated Ἰησοῦς as “Jesus” in the Old Testament, people might think that it was the Son of God who succeeded Moses. And, if they translated Ἰησοῦς as “Joshua” in the New Testament, they might think He was the same Joshua who succeeded Moses.

But the translators were not consistent on this point. For example, at the beginning of Paul’s first missionary journey, he encountered a Jewish magician and false prophet by the name of Elymas (Acts 13:8):

And when they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was *Bar-Jesus* (Βαριησοῦς). (Acts 13:6-7)

The full name of the false prophet was “Elymas Bar-Jesus,” i.e., his father’s name was Ἰησοῦς (Jesus or Joshua). This does not mean that the Son of God while on earth slept with a woman and procreated a child by the name of Elymas. It simply means that the name Ἰησοῦς was a common name among first century Jews.

The Greek Scholars

Dr. Kenneth Wuest translates the passage as follows:

Because of which voluntary act of supreme self-renunciation God also supereminently exalted Him to the highest rank and power, and graciously bestowed upon Him the Name, the Name which is above every name, in order that in recognition

of the Name which Jesus possesses. (Phil. 2:9-10, *Wuest Expanded Translation*)

Dr. Wuest explains why he emphasized that it is “*the Name which Jesus possesses*” and not the name Jesus *per se*:

Paul says, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him THE NAME [the definite article is used in the Greek], that at THE NAME of Jesus every knee should bow” (Phil. 2:9). That name is not Jesus. The later designate was given Him at His birth. Paul is speaking here of His exaltation consequent upon His humiliation.⁵⁹

J.B. Lightfoot, whose commentary on Philippians is still regarded as the best, comments:

“In the name,” i.e., the majesty, the manifestation to man, as an object of worship and praise. It is not “the name Jesus,” but “the name of Jesus.” The name here must be the same with the name in the preceding verse. And the personal name Jesus cannot there be meant; for the bestowal of the name is represented as following upon the humiliation and death of the Son of Man.⁶⁰

Prof. H. C. G. Moule points out in his commentary that it is:

Not “the name Jesus,” but “the name of, belonging to, to Jesus.” . . . “The Name” is still the Supreme Name, Jehovah, as just above.⁶¹

This interpretation is also supported by Dr. Kennedy in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*:

To what does ὄνομα refer? It is only necessary to read on, and the answer presents itself. The universal outburst of worship proclaims that Jesus Christ is Κύριος, Lord, the equiv. of O.T. Jehovah, the highest name that can be uttered.⁶²

The same is stated by Barry in *Ellicott's Commentary*:

“The Name” (for this seems to be the best reading) is clearly “the Name” of God. It is properly the name Jehovah, held in

the extremist literal reverence by the Jews, and it came to signify (almost like “the Word”) the revelation of the presence of God.⁶³

The “name above all names” is not Jesus but Yahweh. Even many Trinitarians have failed to understand this point.

Jesus Is the Holy Spirit

Dr. Bernard is just as unsuccessful in proving that Jesus is the Holy Spirit as he was at proving that Jesus is the Father. He uses the same basic arguments once again.

The Name of the Holy Spirit is Jesus

His first argument is that the name of the Holy Spirit is Jesus:

The Spirit is revealed and received through the name Jesus. He is not a separate person with a separate identity who comes in another name. Jesus said, “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name. . . .” (John 14:26). So the Holy Ghost comes in the name of Jesus.⁶⁴

Once again he misunderstands the meaning of the phrase “in the name of.” The passage does not say that the name of the Holy Spirit is Jesus. Jesus was saying that He has given *authority* to the Spirit to minister to the saints.

The Spirit of Christ

His next argument is based on the phrases “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9; I Pet. 1:11) and “the Spirit of Jesus” (Acts 16:7; Phil. 1:19). Bernard argues that these phrases mean “the Spirit *who is* Jesus.”⁶⁵

We agree that the word “Spirit” refers to the Holy Spirit. But we do not agree with Bernard that the Holy Spirit is the “spirit” of Jesus in the same way that we have a spirit or soul.

Bernard once again fails to understand the grammar and syntax of the Greek text. The word “of” in the phrase “the Spirit *of* Jesus” must be understood as the *genitive of origin*, i.e., not the Spirit who is Jesus, but the Spirit *who comes from or proceeds forth from* the Father and the Son⁶⁶.

"When the Helper comes, *whom I will send to you from the Father*, that is the Spirit of truth, who *proceeds from the Father*, He will bear witness of Me." (John 15:26)

When Jesus is called "the Son of David," it obviously does not mean that Jesus is David, anymore than "the Spirit of Jesus" means that He is the Spirit! Jesus proceeds from or has His origin in the seed of David.

The other texts Bernard presents such as II Corinthians 3:17 have already been examined in our chapter on the Holy Spirit.

The Arguments Against Modalism

We will now summarize some of the chief arguments against Modalism:

1. Philosophically, Modalism has its roots in the Platonic concept of the indivisibility of the Monad. We have documented this fact from the third century to the present day. Thus Modalism or Oneness theology is a product of pagan philosophy.
2. Logically, we have seen that its main arguments are based on simple fallacies such as circular reasoning. When we took their arguments and applied them to their own theology, they refuted themselves.
3. Practically, since there are dozens of "manifestations" of God recorded in Scripture, would this not reduce the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to irrelevance? Dr. Bernard clearly states:

In this chapter, we have discussed three prominent manifestations of God. Does this mean that God is limited to these three roles? Do the terms *Father, Son and Holy Ghost* encompass all that God is? Despite the prominence these manifestations have in the New testament plan of redemption and salvation, it does not appear that God can be limited to these roles, titles, or manifestations. God manifested Himself in many ways in the Old Testament For example, He is King, Lord, Bridegroom, Husband, Brother, Apostle, High Priest, Lamb, Shepherd, and the Word. While Father, Son, and Holy Ghost represent three important roles, titles, or manifestations, God is not limited to these three, nor does the number three have a special significance with respect to God.⁶⁷

What this means is that Modalism does not believe in the Trinity in any sense whatsoever. In the passage cited above, Dr. Bernard lists an additional *ten* manifestations besides the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Of course, the Bible uses many figures of speech to describe God such as the “cloud” and the “pillar of fire” (Exod. 13:21). Bernard has reduced the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to irrelevance.

4. Their Old Testament arguments either ignore or violate the rules of Hebrew grammar and syntax. The multi-personal nature of God is revealed by the use of plural nouns, verbs, pronouns, and adjectives in the Hebrew text. See our discussion of Genesis 1:26, 27; 3:22; 11:7; Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 6:8; etc.

Modalism contradicts the clear teaching of such passages as Isaiah 48:16:

“And now the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit.”

In our exegesis of this passages in a previous chapter, we demonstrated that in the context three Persons are in view:

The Lord God = the Father (the Sender)

Me = the Son (Sent by the Father)

His Spirit = the Holy Spirit (Sent by the Father)

Bernard's attempt to avoid this fact is not very convincing.⁶⁴ The same holds true for his treatment of Daniel 7:9-28, where the Father and the Son are seen as two distinct Persons or Zechariah 13:7, where the Messiah is called the “Fellow of Yahweh.”

In the Old Testament, the pre-existence of the Son is clearly stated in Proverbs 30:4. It is not a prophecy as Bernard pretends.⁶⁵ The Father talks to the Son in such passages as Psalms 45:6; 110:1-2; 102:25.

5. In the New Testament, Modalists consistently violate the rules of Greek grammar and syntax. The Granville Sharp rule reveals that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are grammatically viewed as separate Persons in baptism (Matt. 28:19), the benedictions (i.e., II Cor. 13:14) and other passages, such as Romans 15:30.

There are dozens of passages in the New Testament where we have already seen that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are

distinguished from each other by what role they play in the plan of salvation. We are chosen by the Father, purchased by the Son, and sealed by the Spirit, blessed God Three in One (Eph. 1:3-13). Also, the Virgin birth (Luke 1:35), the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:15-17), and many other passages refer to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as Three Persons.

The New Testament clearly teaches the doctrine of eternal Sonship in John 3:16; Romans 8:3, and Hebrews 1:6; 10:5-7.

6. In John 8:13, the Jews challenged Jesus:

The Pharisees therefore said to Him, "You are bearing witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true."

Jesus responded by stating that according to Deuteronomy 19:15, the testimony of two or three witnesses is sufficient to establish truth. In this case, He was one witness and the Father was the second witness:

My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and He who sent Me. Even in your law it has been written, that the testimony of two men is true. I am He who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me. (John 8:16-18)

This passage is definitive. Jesus states that He is not the only witness, but the Father is a second witness who can bear witness to the truth. If Modalism were true, then Jesus was a liar, for there was no second witness because He and the Father were one and the same person. If the personhood of the Father is denied, then the witness of Jesus is invalidated.

7. Modalism has never been able to answer such questions as: How can Jesus be seated "at the right hand of God" the Father if He is the Father? How can Jesus be both the Sender and the Sent; the One who prays and the One to whom the prayer is directed; the sacrifice and the One to whom the sacrifice is given? etc.

8. If Modalism were true, then we should not expect to find plural pronouns such as *we*, *our*, etc., used in reference to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But this is exactly what we find in John 14:23-26:

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves *Me*, he will keep *My* word; and *My Father* will love him, and *We* will come to him, and make *Our* abode with him. He who

does not love *Me* does not keep *My* words; and *the word which you hear is not Mine*, but *the Father's who sent Me*. These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. But *the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.*"

Jesus states the word He spoke was not His word, but the Father's. Thus, He cannot be the Father. He and the Father were a "We" and "Our" relationship. The Holy Spirit would come from the Father and abide with the believer.

Notice also, that the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter or Helper. In John 14:16, Jesus says:

"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you *another* Helper, that He may be with you forever."

καὶ ἐγὼ ἐρωτήσω τὸν πατέρα, καὶ ἄλλον
παράκλητον δώσει ὑμῖν, μένη ἵνα μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰς τὸν
αἰῶνα

The translated "another" is ἄλλον. This little Greek word is sufficient, in and of itself, to refute the idea that Jesus is the Holy Spirit. A.T. Robertson comments:

Another Comforter (ἄλλον παρακλητον). Another of like kind (ἄλλον, not ἕτερον), besides Jesus who becomes our Paraclete, Helper, Advocate, with the Father (1John 2:1, Cf. Rom. 8:26f.). This old word (Demosthenes), from παρακαλεω, was used for legal assistant, pleader, advocate, one who pleads another's cause (Josephus, Philo, in illiterate papyrus), in N.T. only in John's writings, though the idea of it is in Rom. 8:26-34. Cf. Deissmann, *Light, etc.*, p. 336. So the Christian has Christ as his Paraclete with the Father, the Holy Spirit as the Father's Paraclete with us (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 John 2:1).⁶⁰

Obviously, if the Spirit is "another" Helper, He cannot be the *same* Helper. There is simply no rational way to avoid the truth that Jesus cannot be the Holy Spirit in this passage.

9. Lastly, like the Greek philosophers of old, the Modalists end up with an unknowable God. All we find in Scripture is a record of the different masks and disguises donned by this unknowable God.

Since Bernard describes the God behind the masks as “*invisible*” and then goes on to describe Jesus of Nazareth as just one *visible manifestation* of this invisible God, then Jesus *per se* is not the invisible God.⁷⁰ He is only a mask God put on at the Incarnation.

What God then lies behind all the roles, masks, disguises, titles, modes, and manifestations? No one knows.

Conclusion

The Trinity is reduced to a mere charade in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are only masks worn by an unknowable god. Such a deity is not worthy of our worship, praise or love. It is a “Christianized” version of the unknowable, indivisible Monad of Greek philosophy and is intrinsically inferior to the Holy Trinity.

Notes

1. Harold Brown, *Heresies*, 100.
2. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:597.
3. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:125.
4. McClintock and Strong, 7:156.
5. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 611.
6. *Ibid.*, 612.
7. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:627.
8. Colin Wilson, *The Occult* (New York: Random, 1971), 277.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, 278.
11. Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Four Doctrines* (New York: Swedenborg, 1914), 182.
12. *Ibid.*, 185.
13. *Ibid.*, 188.
14. Emanuel Swedenborg, *Divine Lover and Wisdom* (New York: Swedenborg, 1914), 137-139.
15. Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Divine Providence* (New York: Swedenborg, 1914), 137-138.
16. *Ibid.*, 368-369.
17. F. H. Burns, *The Trinity* (Chicago: Griggs, 1874).
18. John Miller, *Is God a Trinity?* (Hazelwood, MO: World Aflame, 1975 reprint of 1876 ed.)
19. Robert Weeks, *Jehovah Jesus* (New York: Meed, 1876), 49.
20. *Ibid.*, 50.

21. Ibid., 53.
22. Ibid., 57.
23. Ibid., 58.
24. Elmer T. Clark, *The Small Sects in America* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965), 104-105.
25. David K. Bernard, *The Oneness of God* (Hazelwood, MO: World Aflame, 1983), 243-244. The many other Oneness books we consulted are listed in the bibliography.
26. Frank J. Ewart, *The Phenomenon of Pentecost* (Hazelwood, MO: World Aflame, 1947), 67.
27. Ibid., 39.
28. Ibid., 15:74.
29. Hendriksen, *Colossians*, 145-146.
30. Bernard, *The Oneness of God*, 288.
31. Ibid., 286.
32. Ibid., 263.
33. Ibid., 264-265.
34. Ibid., 266-268.
35. Ibid., 294.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 289.
39. Ibid., 290.
40. Ibid., 257.
41. Ibid., 26, 33, 63, 64, etc.

42. Ibid., 290.

43. Ibid., 290.

44. Ibid., 291.

45. Ibid., 66.

46. David K. Bernard, *Essential Doctrines of the Bible* (Hazelwood, MO: World Aflame, 1988), 7.

47. *The Oneness of God*, 126.

48. Cooper, 201.

49. Thomas V. Moore, *Zechariah* (London: Banner of Truth, 1968), 198-200.

50. David Baron, *The Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1962), 437.

51. See Pusey, *Minor Prophets*, II:438 for a discussion of this point.

52. For example, *The New Berkley Version* reads, "they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced."

53. BDB, 201.

54. (i.e., Num. 25:8; Judg., 9:54; I Sam. 31:4, etc.) Some have tried to argue that in Lamentations 4:9 the word does not mean "pierce." But the words "pierced by the sword" and "pierced by hunger" are examples of Hebrew parallelism and mean that while hunger will kill you just as surely as a sword, hunger takes longer and hence means more suffering. Thus, being pierced through by hunger is the same thing as being pierced through by a sword. Either way you end up dead.

55. Ellicott, 5:588-589.

56. *The Babylonian Talmud* (London: Socino, 1938) MO'ED 3, Sukkah, p. 246, see also 247.

57. For a listing of rabbinic comments see David Cooper, 200-208 and David Baron, *The Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1962), 437-455.

58. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 3:597. For a discussion of this heresy, see Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 2:576f.
59. Wuest, *Expanded Translation*, xv.
60. Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 114.
61. H.C.G. Moule, *Philippians Studies*, 95-96, n.3.
62. *Expositors Greek New Testament*, 3:438.
63. *Ellicott's Commentary*, 8:74-75. See also Johnstone, 156.
64. *Oneness*, 129.
65. *Ibid.*, 132.
66. Books and Winberry give an excellent discussion of the "genitive of origin" in *Syntax of New Testament Greek*, 8f.
67. *Oneness*, 142.
68. *Ibid.*, 159-160.
69. *Word Pictures*, 5:252.
70. *Oneness*, 24-25.

Conclusion

We have demonstrated the biblical basis of the Trinity from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation. There is more than sufficient evidence from both Testaments to prove the multi-personal and triune nature of God to those who are willing to will the will of God (John 7:17).

The Holy Trinity is not a product of pagan religions or Greek philosophies, but of Holy Scripture. There is only one, true, living, eternal, infinite, triune Being who is God by nature and Maker of heaven and earth: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All that remains is to move from theology to doxology, from theory to practice. It is not enough to believe in the doctrine of the Trinity. We must transcend doctrine and fall to our knees in worship, prayer, and praise to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Gloria Patri (2nd Century)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world
without end. Amen.

Praise Ye the Triune God! (1859)

Praise ye the Father! For his lovingkindness, tenderly cares he
for his erring children; praise him, ye angels, praise him in the
heavens, praise ye Jehovah!

Praise ye the Savior! Great is his compassion, graciously cares
he for his chosen people; young men and maidens, ye old men
and children, praise ye the Savior!

Praise ye the Spirit! Comforter of Israel, sent of the Father and
the Son to bless us; praise ye the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
praise ye the triune God! (Elizabeth Charles)

Appendix

Jesus in the Mishnah and Talmud

Introduction

The statements concerning Jesus in the Mishnah and the Talmud are of historical worth because they indicate why many of the first century Jews rejected the claim that Jesus was the long awaited Jewish Messiah. They did not claim that Jesus never existed or that He did not do the "miracles" attributed to Him. Instead, they gave an alternate explanation of the basic facts concerning His unusual birth, infant trip to Egypt, miracles, death, and resurrection.

The problem that confronts us today is that all the references to Jesus were removed from the talmudic texts in 1631 A.D. by the order of the Synod of Jewish leaders at Petrikau, Poland. This regrettable fact has been noted by both Jewish and Christian talmudic scholars.¹ The order of censorship is as follows:

Great Peace to our beloved brethren of the house of Israel. Having received information that many Christians have applied themselves with great care to acquire that knowledge of the language in which our books are written, we therefore enjoin you, under the penalty of the great ban (to be inflicted upon you as shall transgress our statute), that you do not, in any new edition either of the Mishna or Gemara, publish anything relative to Jesus of Nazareth; and you take special care not to write anything concerning him, either good or bad, so that neither ourselves nor our religion may be exposed to any injury.²

Thankfully, copies of the uncensored pre-1631 texts can be found in Oxford University and several other European libraries. Thus, the statements about Jesus were never actually "lost." They were published separately in numerous editions and studied by Jewish scholars in private. No one denies these facts any more.

While the Soncino edition of the Babylonian Talmud is a censored text, the editors usually give the uncensored original readings in a footnote. We

have put the statements about Jesus back into the text where they originally belonged and have indicated this by [].

The Talmud is divided into the Mishnah and the Gemara. The Mishnah is usually viewed as covering material up to 220 A.D. and is called the Tannaite period. The Gemara picks up after the Mishnah and covers material up to the fifth century and is called the Amoraim period. But it must be remembered that the Gemara often contains older Mishnahic statements.³ The Tannaite statements about Jesus are identified below. All other readings are from the Amoraim period:

Mishnah Jeb. iv. 13 [b. Jeb. 49]	j. Sanh. vii. 16.	b. Sanh. 43.
T. Shab. xi. 15.	b. Sanh. 67.	
I. Sanh. ix. 7.	b. A. Zar. 16, 17.	
T. Hull. ii, 22, 23.	b. Shab. 104.	

We will also give any footnotes found in the Soncino edition that relate to the identification of Jesus in the uncensored text where deemed of any importance.

Their apologetic value is great. The Bible says that "the wrath of man will praise thee" (Ps. 61:10). When debating the issue of whether Jesus ever existed, the talmudic references to Jesus are a valid historical proof of His existence and of the basic facts of His birth, life, and death. Even out of the mouth of His worse enemies comes irrefutable proof of His existence.

Jesus is called by many different names in the Talmudic material: Jesus, Jeshu, Yeshu, the Nazarene, Jose, Ben Stada, the Son of Stada, Mesith, Ben Padira, Such-a-One, So-and-So, Balaam, the king, Minim, and ha-Notzri.

We must warn the reader that the following citations from the Mishnah and Talmud are not for the faint of heart or weak of stomach. To the Christian, these citations are sheer blasphemy. One can easily see why some misguided cultural Christians in the Middle Ages persecuted the Jews.

In modern times, Christian leaders have publicly apologized to the Jews for the terrible things done to them since the Middle Ages. The reverse should now happen. Jewish leaders should now publicly apologize for the terrible things they said about Jesus in the Mishnah and Talmud. This would show good faith on their part and go a long to reduce anti-Semitic feelings among Christians.

What to Look for in the Texts

According to the Talmud, the mother of Jesus was perhaps of noble birth and was named Miriam or Mary. She was a hairdresser by trade. Her

husband's name was Pappus ben Jehudah, but her lover's name was Panderia. She is also said to have had an adulterous affair with a carpenter.

Jesus was conceived out of wedlock or by an adulterous affair and was, thus, a bastard. His trip to Egypt as a child is interpreted as the occasion when He learned the tricks used by magicians. Although His miracles were only illusions, He deceived many. He sinned against Israel like Balaam and caused many to sin against God by heresy. For this, He was condemned and excommunicated.

According to the Jewish records, Jesus claimed to be God, the "son of man" and even claimed to be able to raise himself from the dead. This is historical proof that the Palestinian Church worshipped Jesus as God. At Lud, He was convicted of false teaching, blasphemy, and revolution by witnesses who hid from His sight. The unfairness of the trial is seen from the fact that He was not allowed to face His accusers.

For His supposed crimes, Jesus was first stoned and then hung or crucified. When the herald proclaimed this verdict not one person came forward in His behalf. He was hung on the eve of the Passover which was also the eve of the Sabbath. He was thirty-three at the time of his death and had five disciples. After His death, Jesus was cast into hell where he will suffer eternal punishment by being boiled in hot semen and excrement for his crimes. Such disgusting language reveals the deep hatred they had for Jesus.

The basic chronology of Christ's life is, thus, verified by the testimony of His enemies. The Jews did not deny that He was born or that His mother's name was Mary. They did not deny that His birth was out of the ordinary or that He was taken to Egypt as an infant. They do not even deny that He did remarkable things which some interpreted as miracles. They just gave the explanation that these "miracles" were actually a magician's tricks.

That Jesus was arrested and put to death is also verified by the Talmud. Even the names of some of His chief apostles are given which is a solid proof of their historical existence. Over all, the Talmud testifies to the reliability of the historical events set forth in the Gospels.

The Texts

I. His Birth

MISHNAH.[104b] If one writes on his flesh, he is culpable; He who scratches a mark on his flesh.

He who scratches a mark on his flesh, [etc.] It was taught, R. Eliezer said to the Sages: But did not Ben Stada bring forth witchcraft from Egypt by means of scratches [in the form of charms] upon his flesh? He was a fool, answered they, and proof cannot be adduced from fools. [Was he then the son of Stada: surely he was the son of Pandira?—Said R. Hisda: The husband was Stada, the paramour was Pandira. But the husband was Pappos b.

Judah? - His mother was Stada. But his mother was Miriam the hairdresser?—It is as we said in Pumbeditha: This one has been unfaithful to (lit., "turned away from"—*satath da*) her husband.] SHABBATH 104 b

R. Papa said: When the Mishnah states a MESITH IS A HEDYOT, it is only in respect of hiding witnesses. For it has been taught: And for all others for whom the Torah decrees death, witnesses are not hidden, excepting for this one. How is it done?—A light is lit in an inner chamber, the witnesses are hidden in an outer one [which is in darkness], so that they can see and hear him, but he cannot see them. Then the person he wishes to seduce says to him, "Tell me privately what thou hast proposed to me;" and he does so. Then he remonstrates: "But how shall we forsake our God in Heaven, and serve idols?" If he retracts, it is well. But if he answers: "It is our duty and seemly for us," the witnesses who were listening outside bring him to the Beth din, and have him stoned. ["And thus they did to Ben Stada in Lydda, and they hung him on the even of Passover." Ben Stada was Ben Padira. R. Hisda said: The husband was Stada, the paramour Pandira. But was not the husband Pappos b. Judah?—His mother's name was Stada. But his mother was Miriam, a dresser of woman's hair?:—As they say in Pumbaditha, This woman has turned away (*satath da*) from her husband, (i.e. committed adultery).]

R. Joseph, when he came to the [following] verse, wept: But there is that which is swept away without judgment. [He said]: Is there anyone who passes away before one's [allotted] time?—Yes, as in the story [heard] by R. Bibi b. Abaye, who was frequently visited by the Angel of death. [Once] the latter said to his messenger: Go, bring me Miriam, the women's hairdresser! He went and brought him Miriam, the children's nurse. Said he to him: I told thee Miriam, the women's hairdresser. He answered: If so, I will take her back. Said he to him: Since thou hast brought her, let her be added. But how

were you able to get her?—She was holding a shovel in her hand and was heating [5a] and raking the oven. She took it and put it on her foot and burnt herself; thus her luck was impaired and I brought her. Said R. Bibi b. Abaye to him: Have ye permission to act thus? He answered him: Is it not written: "There is that is swept away without judgment?" He countered: But behold it is written: One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh! He replied: I have charge of them till they have completed the generation, and then I hand them over to Dumah! He [then] asked him: But after all, what do you do with her years? He replied: If there be a Rabbinic scholar who overlooks his hurt, I shall give them to him in her stead. HAGGIAH 4b

Footnote in Soncino: "Supposed by Tosah, to be the Mother of Jesus; cf. Shab. 104b in the earlier uncensored editions. Her description Megaddela (hairdresser) is connected by some with the name of Mary Magdalene whose name was confused with that of Mary, the mother of Jesus."

R. Simeon b. Azzai said: I found a family register in Jerusalem and in it was written, "Such-a-one is a bastard through [a transgression of the law of] thy neighbor's wife," confirming the words of R. Joshua. YEBAMOTH, 4.13

II. His Life

Our Rabbis teach, Ever let the left hand repel and the right hand invite, not like Elisha who repulsed Gehazi with both hands, [and not like Rabbi Joshua ben Perachjah who repulsed Jeshu (the Nazarene) with both hands. What of Rabbi Joshua ben Perachjah? When Jannai the king killed our Rabbis, Joshua ben Perachjah [and Jeshu] fled to Alexandria in Egypt. When there was peace, Simon ben Shetach wrote to him: "From me [Jerusalem] the city of holiness, to thee Alexandria of Egypt [my sister]. My husband stays in thy midst and I sit forsaken." He came and found himself at a certain inn; they showed him great honor. He said, "How beautiful is this Ascania! [Jesus] said to him, "Rabbi, she has narrow eyes." He said, "Wretch, dost thou employ thyself thus?" He sent out 400 trumpets and excommunicated him. He [Jesus] came before him many times and said to him, "Receive me." But he would

not notice him. One day he [i.e., Joshua] was reciting the Shema (i.e., the words: "Hear, O Israel," Deut. vi 4 et seq.), he [i.e., Jesus] came before him. He was minded to receive him, and made a sign to him. He [i.e., Jesus] thought that he repelled him. He went and hung up a tile and worshipped it. Joshua said to him, "Return." He replied, "Thus I have received from thee, that every one who sins and causes the multitude to sin, they give him not the chance to repent." And the teacher [i.e., he who has handed down this tradition] has said, "Jesus the Nazarene practiced magic and led astray and deceived Israel." SANHEDRIN 107b

Our Rabbis have taught, Always let the left hand thrust away and the right hand draw near. Not like Elisha who thrust Gehazi away with both his hands (and not like R. Joshua b. Perahiah who thrust one of his disciples [Jesus the Nazarene] away with both his hands). SOTA, 47a

R. Hisda also said in the name of R. Jeremiah b. Abba: What is meant by the verse, There shall be no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling? "There shall no evil befall thee."—the Evil Impulse shall have no power over thee: "neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling"—thou wilt not be affrighted by nightmares and dread-thoughts; "neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling"—thou wilt not have a son or a disciple who publicly burns his food [like Yeshu (i.e., Jesus) the Nazarene.] SANHEDRIN 103a

There is no breach; [that is], may our company not be like that of David from which issued Ahitophel. And no going forth: [that is] may our company not be like that of Saul from which issued Doeg the Edomite. And not outcry: may our company not be like that of Elisha, from which issued Gehazi. In our broad places: may we produce no son or pupil who disgraces himself in public [like the Nazarene.] BERAKOTH 176

Rabbi Abahu said, If a man shall say to thee, "I am God," he lies; if he says, "I am the son of man" he shall rue it; "I will go up to heaven" (to this applies Num. xxiii 19) he saith, but shall not perform it." Jerusalem Talmud Taanith-65b

He who upon the Sabbath cuts letters upon his body is, according to the view of Rabbi Eliezer built, according to the view of the sages he is not guilty. Rabbi Eliezer said to the sages: "Ben Stada surely learned sorcery by such writing." They replied to him: "Should we in any wise on account of a fool destroy all reasonable men?" Tosephta Shabbath XII

He who scratches on the skin in the fashion of writing is guilty, but he who makes marks on the skin in the fashion of writing is exempt from punishment. Rabbi Eliezer said to them: "But has not Ben Stada brought magic spells out of Egypt in this way?" They answered him: "On account of one fool we do not ruin a multitude of reasonable men." Jerusalem Shabbath 13d

He who scratches a mark on his flesh [etc.] It was taught, R. Eliezer said to the Sages: But did not Ben Stada bring forth witchcraft from Egypt by means of scratches [in the form of charms] upon his flesh? He was a fool, answered they, and proof cannot be adduced from fools. [Was he then the son of Stada? surely he was the son of Pandira?—Said R. Hisda: The husband was Stada, the paramour was Pandira. But the husband was Pappos b.

Hudah?—His mother was Stada. But his mother was Miriam the hairdresser?—It is as we say in Pumbeditha: This one has been unfaithful to (lit, "turned away from"—*satath da*) her husband. SHABBATH 104b

III. His Trial and Death

When the Mishnah states a MESITH IS A HEDYOT, it is only in respect of hiding witnesses. For it has been taught: And for all others for whom the Torah decrees death, witnesses are not hidden, excepting for this one. How is it done?—A light is lit in an inner chamber, the witnesses are hidden in an outer one [which is in darkness], so that they can see and hear him, but he cannot see them. Then the person he wished to seduce says to him "Tell me privately what thou hast proposed to me;" and he does so. Then he remonstrates; "But how shall we forsake our God in Heaven, and serve idols?" If he retracts, it is well. But if he answers: "It is our duty and seemly for us," the witnesses who were listening outside bring him to the Beth din, and have him stoned. [And thus they did to Ben Stada in

Lydda, and they hung him on the eve of Passover. Ben Stada was Ben Padira.] R. Hisda said: The husband was Stada, the paramour Pandira. But was not the husband Pappos b. Hudah?—His mother's name was Stada. But his mother was Miriam, a dresser of woman's hair? —As they say in Pumbaditha, This woman has turned away (satath da) from her husband, (i.e., committed adultery). SANHEDRIN 67a

And it is tradition: On the eve of the Passover they hung Jeshu [the Nazarene]. And the crier went forth before him forty days (saying), [Jeshu the Nazarene] goeth forth to be stoned, because he hath practiced magic and deceived and led astray Israel. Any one who knoweth aught in his favor, let him come and declare concerning him. And they found naught in his favor. And they hung him on the eve of the Passover. Ulla said, "Would it be supposed that [Jeshu the Nazarene] a revolutionary, had aught in his favor?" He was a deceiver, and the Merciful (i.e., God) hath said (Deut. xiii. 8), "Thou shalt not spare, neither shalt thou conceal him." But it was different with [Jeshua the Nazarene] for he was near to the kingdom. Sanhedrin 43a

Rabbi Meir used to say, What is the meaning of (Deut. xxi. 23), For a curse of God is he that is hung? [It is like a case of] two brothers, twins, who resembled each other. One ruled over the whole world, the other took to robbery. After a time the one who took to robbery was caught, and they crucified him on a cross. And every one who passed to and fro said, "It seems that the king is crucified." Therefore it is said, A curse of God is he that is hung. T. Sanh. ix. 7

As if to say why was he hanged?—because he cursed etc. It has been taught: R. Meir said: A parable was stated; To what is this matter comparable? To two twin brothers [who lived] in one city; one was appointed king, and the other took to highway robbery. At the king's command they hanged him. But all who saw him exclaimed, "The king is hanged!" whereupon the king issued a command and he was taken down. SANHEDRIN 46b

Onkelos son of Kolonikos was the son of Titus's sister. He had a mind to convert himself to Judaism. He went and raised

Titus from the dead by magical arts, and asked him: Who is most in repute in the [other] world? He replied: Israel. What then, he said, about joining them? He said: Their observances are burdensome and you will not be able to carry them out. Go and attack them in that world and you will be at the top, as it is written. Her adversaries are become the head, etc.: whoever harasses Israel becomes head. He asked him: [57a] What is your punishment [in the other world]? He replied: What I decreed for myself. Every day my ashes are collected and sentence is passed on me and I am burnt and my ashes are scattered over the seven seas. He then went and raised Balaam by incantations. He asked him: Who is in repute in the other world? He replied: Israel. What then, he said, about joining them? He replied: Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever. He then asked: What is your punishment? He replied: With boiling hot semen. He then went and raised by incantations [Jesus]. He asked them: Who is in repute in the other world? They replied: Israel. What about joining them? They replied: Seek their welfare, seek not their harm. Whoever touches them touches the apple of his eye. He said: What is your punishment? They replied: With boiling hot excrement, since a Master has said: Whoever mocks at the words of the Sages is punished with boiling hot excrement. Observe the difference between the sinners of Israel and the prophets of the other nations who worship idols. It has been taught: Note from this incident how serious a thing it is to put a man to shame, for God espoused the cause of Bar Kamza and destroyed His House and burnt His Temple. GITTIN 56b-57a

They asked R. Eliezer: "What about 'So-and-so' in the world to come?"—He replied. "Have you asked me only about this one?" "May one save the lamb from the lion?"—He said to them: "Have you asked me only about the lamb?" "May one save the shepherd from the lion?"—He said to them: "Have you asked me only about the shepherd?" "May a mamzer inherit?"—[He replied]: "May he marry the wife of his brother who died without issue?" "May one whitewash his house?"—[He replied]: "May one whitewash his grave?"—[His evasion was due] not to his desire to divert them with words [counter-questions], but because he never said anything that he had not heard from his teacher. YOMA 66b

Footnote in Soncino: "Some see in Peloni, 'So and So,' a reference to Jesus."

Balaam also the son of Beor, the soothsayer, [did the children of Israel slay with the sword]. A soothsayer? But he was a prophet!—R. Johanan said: At first he was a prophet; but subsequently a soothsayer. R. Papa observed: This is what men say, "She who was the descendant of princes and governors, played the harlot with carpenters." [106b: Did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them. Rab said: They subjected him to four deaths, stoning, burning, decapitation and strangulation.]

A certain min said to R. Hanina: Hast thou heard how old Balaam was?—He replied: It is not actually stated, but since it is written, Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days. [it follows that] he was thirty-three or thirty-four years old. He rejoined: Thou hast said correctly; I personally have seen Balaam's Chronicle, in which it is stated, "Balaam the lame was thirty years old when Phinehas the Robber killed him." SANHEDRIN 106b

Footnote in Soncino: "Balaam is frequently used in the Talmud as a type for Jesus (v. also pp. 64-70). Though no name is mentioned to shew which woman is meant, the mother of Jesus may be alluded to, which theory is strengthened by the statement that she mated with a carpenter. (The Munich MS. has in the margin instead of i.e., singular instead of plural.) Balaam being used as an alias for Jesus, Phinehas the Robber is thus taken to represent Pontius Pilatus, and the Chronicle of Balaam probably to denote a Gospel."

And he took up his parable and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this! R. Simeon b. Lakish said: Woe unto him who maketh himself alive by the name of God. {a covert allusion to Jesus.} SANHEDRIN 106a

IV. Jewish Attitude Toward Him

(Mnemonic: ebed yishtahaveh meloshiah). Abaye said, how do I know it? Because we have learnt, HE WHO ENGAGES IN IDOL WORSHIP, IT IS ALL ONE WHETHER HE SERVE IT etc.

Surely it means: whether he serve it through love or fear, [or whether he sacrifice to it as a god]. SANHEDRIN 61b

Footnote in Soncino: "Lit. 'The servant shall bow down to the anointed one.' Three passages are adduced, whose catchwords are respectively, Service, Prostration, The Anointed One. S. Funk (*Die Juden in Babylonien*, p. 94, n. 2) sees in this mnemonic an allusion to the Christians acceptance of Jesus, 'the servant,' being the title claimed by those who worship him as the Messiah."

MISHNAH. The blasphemer is punished only if he utters [the divine] name. Josehua B. Karha said: The whole day [of the trial] the witnesses are examined by means of a substitute for the divine name, thus, "May Jose smite Jose." When the trial was finished, the accused was not executed on this evidence, but all persons were removed [from court], and the chief witness was told, "State literally what you heard." Thereupon he did so, [using the divine name]. The judges then arose and rent their garments, which rent was not to be resewn. The second witness stated; "I too have heard thus" [but not uttering the divine name]. And the third says: "I too heard thus." SANHEDRIN 56a

Footnote in Soncino: "According to Levy, s.v., the first Jose stands for Jesus (son), and the second is an abbreviation of Joseph, the Father, by which, however, God was to be understood. The witnesses were accordingly asked whether the accused in his blasphemy had set Jesus above God."

Our Rabbis taught: When R. Eliezer was arrested because of Minuth they brought him up to the tribunal to be judged. Said the governor to him, "How can a sage man like you occupy himself with those idle things?" He replied, "I acknowledge the Judge as right." The governor thought that he referred to him. [—though he really referred to his Father in Heaven]—and said, "Because thou hast acknowledged me as right, I pardon; thou art acquitted." When he came home, his disciples called on him to console him, but he would accept no consolation. Said R. Akiba to him, "Master, wilt thou permit me to say one thing of what thou hast taught me?" He replied, "Say it." "Master," said he, "perhaps some of the teaching of the Minim has been transmitted to thee [17a] and thou didst approve of it and

because of that thou wast arrested?" He exclaimed: "Akiba thou hast reminded me." I was once walking in the upper-market of Sepphoris when I came across one [of the disciples of Jesus the Nazarene] Jacob of Kefar-Sekaniah by name, who said to me: It is written in your Torah, Thou shalt not bring the hire of a harlot . . . into the house of the Lord thy God. May such money be applied to the erection of a retiring place for the High Priest? To which I made no reply. Said he to me: Thus was I taught [by Jesus the Nazarene], For of the hire of a harlot hath she gathered them and unto the hire of a harlot shall they return: they came from a place of filth, let them go to a place of filth. Those words pleased me very much, and that is why I was arrested for apostasy; for thereby I transgressed the scriptural words, Remove thy way far from her—which refers to minuth—and come not nigh to the door of her house,—which refers to the ruling power. ABODAH ZARAH 16b-17a

Our Rabbis taught: Yeshu had five disciples, Matthai, Nakai, Nezer, Buni and Todah. When Matthai was brought [before the court] he said to them [the judges], Shall Matthai be executed? Is it not written, Matthai [when] shall I come and appear before God? Thereupon they retorted: Yes, Matthai shall be executed, since it is written, When Matthai [when] shall [he] die and his name perish. When Nakai was brought in he said to them: Shall Nakai be executed? It is not written, Naki [the innocent] and the righteous slay thou not? Yes, was the answer, Nakai shall be executed, since it is written, In secret places does Naki [the innocent] slay. When Nezer was brought in, he said: Shall Nezer be executed? Is it not written, And Nezer [a twig] shall grow forth out of his roots. Yes, they said, Nezer shall be executed, since it is written, But thou art cast forth away from thy grave like Nezer [an abhorred offshoot]. When Buni was brought in, he said: Shall Buni be executed? Is it not written, Beni [my son], my first born? Yes, they said, Buni shall be executed, since it is written, Behold I will slay Bine-ka [thy son] thy first born. And when Todah was brought in, he said to them: Shall Todah be executed? Is it not written, A psalm for Todah [thanksgiving]? Yes, they answered, Todah shall be executed, since it is written, Whoso offereth the sacrifice of Todah [thanksgiving] honored me. SANHEDRIN 43a

Conclusion

The Jewish witness to the historicity of the basic chronology of the birth, life, and death of Jesus should be of great interest to Christians and Jews. Today, the Jewish reclamation of Jesus is gaining momentum. But to acknowledge that Yeshua was a great Rabbi is not going far enough. He was the long awaited Messiah, the Savior of the world.

Notes

1. Herman L. Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1980), 277.
2. John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, And Ecclesiastical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 5:172.
3. For a discussion of this point see: Bernard Pick, *Jesus in the Talmud* (London: Open Court, 1913). Robert Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1903).

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